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SERMONS

PREACHED IN RUGBY SCHOOL CHAPEL

IN

1862—1867.



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BY THE RIGHT REV.

FREDERICK TEMPLE, D.D.

Lord Bishop of Exeter.

B-C. 28

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SERMON I.

DISOBEDIENCE.*

HEBREWS xiii. 17.

'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.'

YOU will remember that last half-year we lost one of our number by a sudden death which came upon him in consequence of his disobedience to orders. I do not know whether he who was thus taken away knew that he was disobeying. But whether he did or not, it is quite certain that if the school at large were more careful in this matter we should not have had to lament his death. I did not like to say much at the time, although there was much to be said. I did not like to say much, because it seemed to me irreverent when God had so visited us, to do anything but submit quietly and even silently. I could not bear while sorrow was still fresh to say a word which might have even the appearance of using so awful a thing as a sudden death for purposes of school discipline. In the immediate presence of death silence is generally the best comment. When God takes away a

* A boy had been drowned while skating contrary to orders.

soul to be dealt with by Himself, what can man do but bow down and worship?

But now that we are further away from the stroke I may perhaps say more fitly what I shrunk from saying before.

I do not wish to make more of the unhappiness of dying suddenly in the act of disobeying some lawful human authority than every man's conscience would make of it. Nothing, for instance, would seem to me more mistaken than to talk as if God's judgment on any man who died suddenly would depend on the accident of what the man might be doing at the moment of death. No man, I think, who had any religious feeling at all would not feel great pain at the idea of dying in the act of doing something wrong, even the very slightest wrong. But that is very different indeed from saying that the decision of God's justice is to be turned this way or that by what as far as the man is concerned is a mere chance.

Still further, I should never for a moment wish to put disobedience to human authority on a level with disobedience to the Bible or disobedience to conscience. It is very wrong to disobey parents; but there are worse wrongs than that. And though we in this place have authority given us by the parents of our scholars, I do not say that disobedience to a master is as bad as disobedience to a father. The distinction is made for us by our own consciences, and I do not wish to obliterate that distinction. Disobedience to orders here is not like lying, is not like swearing, is not like impurity. Disobedience to our orders does not stain and degrade the character,

does not necessarily blunt the conscience, is not inconsistent with much true and deep religious feeling. Of course if disobedience is persisted in day after day, and becomes downright neglect of duty, it is a very serious sin indeed. But isolated acts of disobedience are not in their own nature by any means the worst faults that a boy is tempted to commit.

I am quite willing to take the estimate of this sin, for a sin it remains, after all allowances are made, which occurs naturally to every thoughtful mind. And when we take this estimate we still find it quite sufficiently condemned to make it impossible to treat it lightly.

In the first place, it is the beginning of a great many temptations. It is just the kind of fault which breaks down the barrier that keeps us from greater faults. It tempts the doer very often to untruth, in order to conceal what has been done; and if it does not tempt you to untruth, it certainly leads to a kind of secrecy which is healthy for no one. It is very often closely akin to a sort of hypocrisy; for if you have a good character and yet do in secret what you know would lower that character if it were known, what is this but wearing a mask? And you may depend upon it, it is very bad for any one to wear a mask of this sort, even if it be a very thin mask.

Again, in the second place, this fault is a most mischievous example. If you will not think it bad for yourself, you can often see how bad it is for others. If it does you no harm, you can by no means be sure that it will do them no harm. In such cases the learner generally betters the instruction.

And yet again, in a place of this sort, disobedience very much interferes with that trust in each other which ought to be at the bottom of all our relations. The governed have a fair right to expect from the governors that orders shall not be given for mere caprice, that there shall be a fair reason for every command. The governors in return ought to feel sure that they will get from the governed a hearty and trusting obedience. Of course it would be absurd to expect that obedience should be perfect; nothing human is perfect. And I do not say that the authorities can expect to find that no one shall ever disobey. Even if it ought to be so, we know that it will not be so. But a hearty spirit of obedience pervading the school is certainly not anything superhuman, and, if boys are to be trusted, ought to be given in return for the trust. One way of governing is to be always present and see that orders are obeyed. Another way is to give orders and trust the governed to obey them. The last is undoubtedly the right mode in a place of Christian education, for the Christian system is essentially free. But this mode becomes impossible if it is not met by a real willingness to obey.

The fact is that a spirit of obedience is absolutely essential to the formation of anything like a noble character. Obedience is at the bottom of all true manliness. For the essence of human strength is self-control. And self-control, that is, the firmness which cannot be shaken by caprices of inclination, by impulses and whims, by temptations, by weariness, by love of variety, but holds definitely to the purpose fixed, is only another name for

obedience to a law. This power of obeying a law, of pursuing with unswerving steadiness a definite aim, is the especial characteristic of manly strength. And this is only learnt by cultivating the habit of obedience.

The habit of obedience is worth cultivating in itself, quite independent of the value of the order given. It is worth while to train our own wills to the practice of yielding hearty complete submission to all authority which we know to be lawful. For no really good work in this world is ever done in which examination will not show that this habit had a chief hand in it. Now this is one of the ways in which God marks out for us the kind of character that He means us to copy. If we see a character which is the invariable condition of all the highest kind of success, which lies at the root of all the noblest work that man can do, we cannot be mistaken in valuing it highly.

I have said all this to-day because I do not think that we lay stress enough on this matter. It is very important to preserve the plain distinction between disobedience to temporary orders and disobedience to God's great moral laws. I would not wish to gain obedience at the cost of blunting the keenness of the conscience when it draws a broad and clear line between two such different things. But I do fear very much that we may sometimes push this too far, and fancy that because disobedience to orders is very far indeed from being a sin of the same nature as lying or the like, therefore it is no sin at all. It is a sin, and a very real sin. It is undeniably a breach of the Fifth Commandment. It spoils one's self-discipline. It encourages us in mischievous thoughtlessness. It exposes

us to needless and sometimes severe temptations. It is quite inconsistent with the highest kind of character.

Our Lord had reason to find fault with the hypocritical scrupulousness of the Pharisees, but yet He never allowed His hearers to suppose that He thought little of disobedience. He rebukes them for paying tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; but He adds immediately, 'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone.' He bids His disciples not to imitate their example, although they sat in Moses' seat; but yet he says, 'All whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.' He came to absorb the old law of the letter into the higher law of the spirit. But He will not sanction disregard of small duties as things of no consequence; for He says, 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven.' This is the spirit of true disciples of Christ,—to see the difference between more important commands and less important, and to let that difference have its true weight, but not on that account to neglect the less altogether.

February, 1862.

SERMON II.

ALMSGIVING.*

2 CORINTHIANS ix. 7.

'*Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*'

THE duty of almsgiving, always a most important Christian duty, every now and then assumes a new form and requires to be regulated for a time by new rules. In ordinary times it demands much discretion but the discretion has to be used quite as much in restraining as in yielding to the impulse to give. In an old country like this a very large proportion of those who solicit help are either downright impostors, or else weak self-indulgent men, who need the stimulus of want to force them to do their own share of maintaining themselves. It may be impossible to say of a given case that it is not one which deserves your aid. But it is quite certain that in the great mass of cases those who solicit alms from strangers do not deserve anything at all. In the great mass of cases, those who cannot get sufficient

* At the time of the Lancashire cotton famine.

help from people who know them and know their circumstances fail to do so because they deserve to fail.

Hence it follows that in ordinary times, while there can be hardly any limit to the kindness which men should bestow on their neighbours and on people whom they know, it is on the other hand very foolish to give much to people whom you do not know. This latter doctrine seems hard. And indeed it would deserve to be called hard if it stood without the former. But there need be no stint to the natural exercise of Christian feelings: nay rather, few, very few Christians can be said to come near the ideal of a Christian character in this matter. For it is not money only that is wanted, but sympathy and encouragement, and the knowledge of kind hearts not far off. By all means let every Christian that has the opportunity and the power show every kindness that he can. He will quickly learn when he engages himself in personal kindnesses how to prevent his kindnesses from doing mischief. But to give alms to every asker when he knows nothing of him is not really fulfilling the Christian law, for it is a matter of experience that this kind of almsgiving is exceedingly mischievous.

Nor can it be said that he who gives very freely to all askers is really moved by kindness of heart. Too often such almsgiving is but the readiest way to satisfy a man's own weak impulse, and rests on no strong sense of duty at all. The real Christian feeling is shown by him who takes trouble about his giving; who refuses to give without enquiry; who as a rule confines his alms to those whom he knows; who gives much more in the form of

personal trouble than in that of money; to whom his poorer neighbours come confidently for help, for advice, for sympathy, but whose door is avoided by the wandering beggar as that of a hard and stern man. Of course the fact that there is so much imposture in the world will be used by men who are really hard and stern as a reason for shutting up their hearts and forgetting altogether the imperative demands of the Gospel on their kindness to their fellow-creatures. But their misuse of this knowledge will not justify a Christian in not using it. The general tendency of all that we know about beggars is to drive us to this conclusion—that we have no right to encourage any to beg from those whom they do not know, but that we never can show too much kindness to those whom we do.

There are, however, occasions when ordinary almsgiving and its ordinary rules are, as it were, set aside by strong and peculiar demands. And the demand now made on England is one of these. We can of course know very little of those poor people in the North who are now suffering by no fault of their own whatever. There are amongst them, of course there are, some impostors: there are some, very few, who will be better off now than ever they were before. But we know for certain that the great mass of these people are not impostors at all, and that never was there a case in all history in which you could be more certain that the suffering was not their own fault. If the stoppage of their trade had lasted only a short time, it might fairly be said to many of them, 'Your distress is the proper punishment of your improvi-

dence. You had good wages; why did you not save against this time of need?' But now we have got clean past all that. Many, very many of these people had saved. The savings' banks were remarkably full; but the stoppage of trade has lasted so long that these savings have been all exhausted. The provident and improvident have all come to one level. The thoughtful man who was comforting himself with the feeling that, even 'if hard times came, or if God took him away, still his wife and children would not be in any immediate distress, would have a resource for some considerable time, would be pretty sure before all was exhausted to find new resources,' now finds that he will have to begin again from the very beginning, and that with a broken spirit, and meanwhile must rely on charity without the slightest power to help himself. And this too has not come with a swift stroke, stunning him for a moment by its blow, but still leaving him with the strength of his full vigour unimpaired. It has crept on and on by slow degrees; giving him months of unremitting anxiety; making his heart sick week after week with hope deferred and disappointed; holding him down to see his own ruin, and leaving him utterly powerless to save himself from it. Sudden and heavy calamities are hard to bear; but how much harder the calamity which approaches with a cruel steadiness, neither hastening at one time nor lingering at another. The pressure of short wages or of high prices for food is very often heavy. But here was added to all the rest the enforced idleness, the weary brooding over his inevitable ruin, the unoccupied thoughts, the unoccu-

pied hands, the soul driven in on itself and, as it were, forbidden even to forget. And still under all this heavy burden there is the attempt to keep up a decent appearance; clean clothes, decent houses; even cheerful looks, too often put on out of the remnants of what was once a sort of pride of independence. There may be much imposture in the world; but this is not imposture, nor can any Christian doubt that here in all their literal fulness do those precepts of liberal almsgiving hold good which at ordinary times we seem to feel to be needing clearer explanation.

Now all England is roused, and there can be no doubt that the need will be met. These people will suffer a good deal, do what we will. But what suffering England can save them from they will be saved from; and every Englishman is bound to take his part in seeing that this shall be so. How can it best be done?

In the first place, if we are to do it rightly we are bound not to let it interfere with those ordinary charities which perpetually call upon us. If you merely divert money which you would have given to one charity and give it to another, it is not you that are giving it at all, it is the man that would have had it if this call had not been made. This is by the very nature of the case not an ordinary charity. It is quite exceptional. No such demand has been made on England since the Irish famine sixteen years ago. To meet it out of your ordinary charities is to mistake its nature altogether. And I press upon this, because this mistake is a very natural and a very common one. There are no doubt some ordinary

charities which can without any mischief be postponed. They may wait till another year. And it is right in the face of this great misery to postpone them. But these are few, and the rest cannot be left unattended to without inflicting suffering somewhere else in order to relieve suffering in the North, and this is not right.

In the next place, then, it follows that you should not hesitate to curtail your own enjoyments for an occasion like this, if you cannot give otherwise. Most of those who hear me cannot give much even then; you have not a great deal to spend, because you are yet too young to have need of money for the greater purposes of life. But out of what you have at your own command you can easily see whether it be not possible to diminish your own pleasures in order to give comfort to shivering and hungry fellow-countrymen. How much in this school is wasted in mere indulgence of the body! Even if there were no imperative demand on you for the money, yet it would be unquestionably a very real and valuable gain to the tone of the whole school if you spent less on eating, as you often do, not for health nor for social friendliness, but to please the palate. It would be better for all if it were generally thought, as it really is, somewhat contemptible, somewhat lowering, to indulge in nice things when you are not really hungry. But whatever may be best for ordinary times this at any rate is not an ordinary time, and such mere pleasures of the body ought to be the first to go. Enough of enjoyment will be left in the ordinary life, and though of course every act of self-denial involves a sacrifice (it would be worthless if it did not), yet it

would be ludicrous to speak of such sacrifices as any real privation.

Once more let me urge what I said this morning, that even small gifts are in such a case of very real use. If we can swell up the amounts in the hands of the Relief Committees till they feel safe in granting the money more freely, it will give many a man a breakfast who now waits hungry till dinner-time, and cover many a child at night that now cannot sleep for cold. It is in the multitude of little offerings moreover that the heart of a people is read, and those who receive it and read accounts of how it is given, are much more touched by the numberless small sums that tell of sympathy than by the large subscriptions which tell of public duty.

How long this will last we cannot quite tell. But we have good reason for thinking that in about four months there will be enough work to relieve the great bulk of the pressure. Meanwhile we must not let these patient uncomplaining sufferers suffer more than we can help. Who knows what is God's purpose in all this? Great calamities have often been God's heralds of great blessings. When I spoke to those poor people, I fully expected to find them downhearted about prudence and thrift; but I repeatedly heard resolutions, if ever work became plentiful again, to be more careful and not to waste the money which might be so much needed. I expected to find traces of anger and of finding fault with the government and with their employers; such as were abundant when they suffered in something like the same way just twenty years ago. But I never heard a complaint. Perhaps they,

the working men, may learn great lessons from it. Perhaps we may. At any rate, it cannot be for nothing that a whole nation's heart should be stirred to its depths, that man should be drawn to man and rank to rank and class to class, and that all should learn to know each other not by the mere intercourse of business but by the bond of cordial sympathy. The issues are in God's hands. This one thing we know: that to help our fellow-creatures is His reiterated charge, and that we cannot do it without finding a blessing in the doing of it.

October 12, 1862.

SERMON III.

THE UNKNOWN GUIDANCE OF GOD.

ISAIAH xlii. 16.

'I will lead them in paths that they have not known.'

THIS is the answer given to those Christians who are tempted to complain that their path is peculiarly hard and peculiarly perplexing. The temptation is a very common one. At very trying times there are few, perhaps there are none, who do not fancy for a moment that their trials are quite unlike those of other people, that their life has been in this instance or in that peculiarly unlucky, that they would have been both better and happier if this had not happened or that had not happened. When we have gone wrong, we say, 'I might have avoided it, if I had never been taken to this place, if I had never fallen in with this friend, if I had never been so unwisely treated.' We sometimes look back on our own lives, and we are inclined to say, 'I was driven into wrong by this man's unkindness;' or 'I was seduced by that man's bad example. Would to God that I had never seen such a man, or would to God that I had

never been put into a circumstance unsuitable to my nature.' We say, 'If I had been treated as so and so was treated, I should have never been as foolish as I have been;' or, 'if it had not been for such an one, I should not then have to carry with me for the rest of my life the memory of so much sin and folly.' It is not that we feel that no blame is due to ourselves for what wrong we have done, but that some at least of the blame is not ours, but belongs to our circumstances. And so we fix our attention on that and not on our own share of the evil, and try to answer our consciences by such pleas instead of making no excuses, but leaving all judgment to God. This, I say, is a very common temptation indeed, and if every one could see the thoughts of every one else, all probably would be amazed to see how each thought his own trials the severest of all.

Now to him who pleads in this way from a mere desire to screen himself from his own conscience, to him who is foolish enough to fancy that his own case is quite peculiar, and that he is very little to blame for a very great fault, it is generally useless to give much answer. It is possible to shut up the eyes of your conscience and to stifle its voice, or at any rate to silence its clear condemnation and obtain instead a mere dumb uneasiness; and if you choose to do it, God will not and man cannot prevent you. If instead of humbly endeavouring to see all your own folly and to cure it or to ask God to cure it, you set to work to transfer it to your circumstances and say that you are not to blame, you can do so. Only remember, that when you have done all that can be done

in this way, a sin will still remain a sin after all. Grant all the palliations, excuses, mitigations that you can think of, the wrong does not become right. And this wrong that still remains is the chief thing—indeed, the one thing worth thinking of.

But to the Christian who seeks not to make foolish excuses, yet feels all these strange doubts and perplexities about the circumstances of his own life; to the Christian who cannot repress a regret, perhaps a passionate regret, that circumstances should have so painfully corresponded with his weakness, and that he should have been tried just in the way in which he believes he was least fit for trial; to such as are sorrowing, repenting, doubting, perplexed, the Bible replies by telling them that God leads men in paths that they have not known.

This is, in fact, a part of the doctrine of St. Paul, that all things work together for good to them that love God. St. Paul here teaches that the events of our lives are arranged and ordered by God, that if we love Him they shall all produce good for us. And the words of Isaiah say the same thing of those events particularly which seem to our eyes an exception to the rule. There are many circumstances in our lives which are evidently meant for our good; we recognise their use to us at the very time; and if we have Christian gratitude within us we say, Thank God for this, or Thank God for that. But there are also circumstances which do not wear this aspect at all: temptations for which we were not ready; burdens which seemed too heavy for us; pains which seemed quite needless; grievous disappointments which seemed

to do us harm instead of good, and which, it may be, even long afterwards, do not, when we look back, appear to have been of use to us, but quite the reverse. And in all these cases, if you are really longing to serve God, you may be certain that God was leading you in paths that you had not known.

It is not promised that you shall ever in this life see enough to be able to recognise this in every case. It is very likely that even to the last you may find it impossible to understand what good you got from this or from that. You may still, if you are required to say what such an acquaintance, such an event, such a trial did for you, be compelled to confess that so far as you can see you got from it no good at all, but much harm. God does not promise that when He has led you by paths that you have not known, you will afterwards be able to see that the path was leading you to Him. Very likely you will not see it all your life. Yet assuredly no Christian shall look back and not see enough abundantly to confirm what is taught by Prophet and by Apostle, that God governs the life of a Christian and suits it to his highest need.

There are two kinds of events in life which make us sometimes doubt this doctrine. Sometimes a heavy burden is placed on the shoulders which seems quite unnecessary for our spiritual welfare. We have to bear something which gives very much pain, and we cannot see how the pain is to do us any good. And perhaps, after all, when we look back on it, we do not see that it has done us any good. It seems to have hardened us

when we were hard enough already, or to have soured us when our tempers were already far from perfect, or to have made us gloomy and sulky, when we needed all the brightness that we could attain unto. The other kind of events are falls that we think we might have avoided if circumstances had not been so peculiarly unlucky. Some great sin which seems to have loaded us with its consequences for years and years, would, we believe, have been altogether avoided if only this or that particular trial had not come upon us at an unguarded moment. Now, if I were to say that these difficulties could, notwithstanding, be explained, I should contradict what I said before. I do not believe it is always possible to clear up a perplexity of this sort. But I am sure that enough is cleared up to make it probable, even without express revelation, that all might be cleared up if only our understandings were larger, so as to take in all that has really come from what has tried us, and all that has been prevented. You have been tried and you have fallen, and you wish you had never been so tried. Yet, perhaps your fall was a revelation of your weakness, made in time to save you from a worse fall of which you know nothing, but towards which you were just then rapidly approaching. Or perhaps it was needed for your own self-knowledge that you should be made aware that this weakness was in you; better that it should come out and show its true nature, than that you should have this evil dormant within you, and fancy it was not there. Or perhaps you needed to be softened by repentance because you were sinking into self-complacency or into forgetfulness of God's

overshadowing aid. Who can tell? God brings good out of evil, and sometimes what we call evil is not so evil in reality as that which we, in our ignorance, would put in its place. These perplexities cannot always be explained. But many of them can and are. Many times what we fancied was hurtful has been of the greatest service; what we flinched from has made us happier; what we dreaded has come and has gone, and has left a blessing behind it. Many a time what we longed for has been denied us, and the denial has made us happier than if we had obtained it. He must be very short-sighted indeed who cannot see in his own life many instances of his having been led by paths that he did not know.

But how is it done? How can we suppose that the course of the universe is changed to suit our case? How can we suppose that events are adapted to us when there are millions besides ourselves to be considered? Nay, does not every step in the progress of science tend to the contrary conclusion? and are we not every day more and more led to believe that the world moves on by a rule and an order which God has given it, and with which He will not interfere, seeing that it was made perfect in the first instance? Can we suppose that one of us, weak and sinful and blind as we are, can be of so much value in the eyes of the Lord of all, that He will change the path of His chariot-wheels, that we may be guided where we need to go?

Now when we are troubled with such thoughts, and inclined to lose that absolute trust in God's tenderness which this doctrine is meant to teach, let us first re-

member that God is not a man, nor is His government of the world like our government of a machine. We can only aim at one purpose; He can embrace many aims. We could either guide by a rule or by a discretion to meet each case. But God is not so limited, and His rules being the breath of His own Spirit, can at once hold a fixed course, and yet be prepared to suit the needs of every individual soul that comes across their operation.

But that is not all. Our life may suit our needs, either by the outer being adapted to the inner, or by the inner being adapted to the outer. What if we were to put the lesson in a different form, and say that if you love God, He will put within you a magic power by which everything that happens to your soul shall be changed to suit your spiritual need? He will fill you with a spirit which shall extract from every circumstance of life just that which your soul really requires; say rather, He Himself will extract it and give it to your soul at the moment when it is wanted. The events shall remain the same in their mere material character, but their effect upon you shall be different. The course of the outer world shall remain precisely what its own laws prescribed, and yet the spiritual power of it, as it reaches you, shall be moulded and directed as will be best for you.

The condition, indeed, must not be forgotten. It was to the chosen people in their penitence that Isaiah declared that God would lead them in paths that they had not known. It was to those that love God that St. Paul promised that all things should work together for good. This is not, indeed, a promise made to the wise nor to

the prompt. It is not said, if you have the good sense and judgment to deal rightly with circumstances as they arise, you will find them suit your purpose well; if you are quick to see and to do what the circumstances require, you will be sure to find all come right at last; if you have the shrewdness to make no gross mistakes, you will not, on the whole, have any reason to complain of ill-fortune. This is the promise which the world makes to us in its own province, and the promise is generally kept. But God's promise is not of this kind. Not to wisdom dealing wisely with circumstances, but to love dealing lovingly does He promise a happy end: not to what *we* can do is the promise made, but what *He* will do if we love Him.

And how can we doubt it? If ever we do, the answer is given by the Cross of Christ. He that gave us His own Son, how shall He not give us everything else that we need? We are weak, and sinful, and blind; but Christ died for us; and not in our own name, but in the name of Christ's death, we claim the fulfilment of the promises. Assuredly we see no need of miracles, and we do not ask for them; but yet if nothing short of a miracle would help us in our need, surely a miracle is not so much to give as Christ's life and death. To that the Christian trusts. If his way seems dark, if he has trials which seem to him for the time harder to bear than the trials of any one else, if he has sinned and cannot keep from his thoughts the belief that his fall was caused by overwhelming temptations, if he cannot tell why he has been put within the reach of so many things to

seduce him or to make him stumble, if he has found trials in his very blessings, and friends who ought to have helped him have been the cause of his fall, and light which ought to have guided him has led him astray, still he will lean on God with the certainty that all this should not make him despair, but only make him strive the harder, and resolve more manfully, and shake off the spell of his own sins, and cling to Christ more resolutely, because God has not forsaken him, but is leading him by paths that he has not known.

November 9, 1862.

SERMON IV.

PERMANENT NEED OF EARNESTNESS.*

HEBREWS xii. 1, 2.

'Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.'

IT is not easy to preach in this Chapel on the 12th of June without going back in thought to the death of the great man who was called away from his work here on this day, just when he seemed to be doing most and to be most wanted by those whom he left. We hope, we have good reason to believe, that the work which he had done is not yet worn out; that this school still retains some of the inheritance which he bequeathed,—an inheritance of a noble spirit, of high traditions, of thoughts and feelings, and ways of talking and acting, passed on unconsciously from generation to generation, both of boys and masters. In some respects we even get more from him than they did who lived under his teaching, for his death has lifted a veil from his name, and all that we know of him now is hallowed by that peculiar sanctity which, thank God, always overshadows a good man's

* Dr. Arnold died at Rugby on June 12, 1842.

grave; whereas in his own day his greatness was partly hidden by his share of the imperfections of human nature, partly distorted by differences of opinion, partly unperceived in the midst of all that was going on around him. Greatness always grows with distance. The true height of a lofty mountain is not seen till you retire from it. And many perhaps would now acknowledge what he was who, if they had lived then, would have found little to admire. This, I say, is one advantage: not surely equal to the advantage of those who saw him and learnt from him, and can recall the tones of his voice and the glance of his eye. But yet not slight. For he has become to us one of the great cloud of witnesses that encompass us about, and point us ever to our Master and to theirs, to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

We have still further advantages in coming after instead of living at the time. We have the great gain that much that he either did or largely helped in doing has been steadily acting on society at large, and in particular on this school, ever since. And the result is that the battle with not a few evils has been fought out and the victory won. Externally both society at large and schools as a part of society are much improved in tone and character. There were many shocking things done at that time, and not only done but tolerated, which would not be tolerated now. The face of social life is fairer, more Christian. There is no need now to stem a downright current of evil. The conversation is certainly better. There is a stronger sense of the duty of truth. There is less of utter disregard of all right. And if there be no more

than this, this is itself a great gain. For the banishment of evil into holes and corners just makes all the difference between the exposure of the weak to terrible temptations and their safety. To a weak conscience it often makes all the difference in the world whether a temptation to sin seeks him or he has to seek the temptation. In the former case he falls to a certainty; in the latter he can often stand upright. And if this be a gain to society at large, much more to a school; where there must be very many who, could they be kept from over-mastering temptations till they were a little older, would by that time have gained strength enough to face the very temptations when they could be avoided no longer.

This is a great gain, but out of this gain comes a danger and a loss. We have lost inspiration. We have lost that stirring of the heart which is the proper accompaniment of the battle with visible great evils. We have lost that sense of the seriousness of life which comes from having often to choose between very wrong and very right. We have lost that perception of the great chasm which separates a good life from a bad. And hence our danger now is not of the sort against which he had to guard, nor are our sins quite the same as those with which he did battle. Nay, perhaps what we have now to encounter is just that which might well make us long for him more than ever. For what we want above all things is that intensity of character which marked him from most other men, and which gave a power and a living energy to all that he did, rarely to be matched in the time that has followed since his death. He felt throughout life

God's hand ever on him. He felt every moment that he was doing or not doing God's work. He threw into every act, into every labour, the consciousness of the divine mission given to all Christians by their Master. And this is just what we miss. The very smoothness and ease of our outer life, the very absence of great and prevailing evils to fight with, makes us need still more than ever that which we cannot have from him any longer, the infection of his energy, his devotedness, his depth of conviction. We are not in danger perhaps of profligacy, we are not in danger, perhaps—and yet I can only say perhaps—of hardening into mere worldliness; it may be that we have had the thought of duty so rung into our ears that the faint echo of the word will never quite leave the memory. We are in no danger, it may be, of turning our lives to downright sin, but we are in danger, yes, in imminent danger, of wasting our lives, of being easily content with ourselves, of abandoning high thoughts, of knowing nothing of the excellent or the pure. We are in danger of slipping quietly down the stream, caring for nothing that is really worth caring for, finding nothing in high and pure service, neither earnest lovers of truth, nor generous in our sacrifice for what is right, nor firm believers in the presence of God, nor devoted to what elevates our common humanity. Although God has filled the world with excellent work to do, yet to some minds His most excellent shall seem poor and not worth doing, and we run a risk, and a real risk in this day, of being found among them.

It is for such a state of the Church that the Epistle to

the Hebrews is intended; and it is against such dangers that the writer summons up the cloud of witnesses whose names are in the well-known eleventh chapter. It is for such times, perhaps, more than for any others, that the dead in Christ can help us by the records that their lives have left behind in the memories of men. Doubtless we wish very often that the very men themselves, or men in some distant degree resembling them, could come back. But that God gives not. What He gives is the memory of great examples, all helping us towards their chief, the Saviour Christ. So the writer bids his readers give more earnest heed to the things that they had heard, lest at any time they should let them slip. So he bids them fear lest a promise being left them of entering into his rest, any of them should seem to come short of it. So he desires them, after one of the most solemn warnings in the whole Bible, to show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. So he bids them call to remembrance the former days in which they endured a great fight of afflictions. So he charges them with having forgotten the exhortation which speaks to them as unto children, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.' So he bids them lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees. All through he is afraid of what? Of apathy; of carelessness; of the temper which cannot find God at hand; of the easy-going service which finds little to be anxious about; of the shallow and frivolous mind which is in danger of falling from mere lack of diligence. This is the temptation of a Church such as that of the Hebrews in that day. They were

lagging; they were losing energy; they were drawing back. And is not this our temptation too?

It is not true that there is nothing for educated and cultivated men either to do or to get ready to do. We are, and every educated man knows it, already entering within the current of a most serious and vital controversy. Questions are before men's minds of the deepest importance to the whole human race. All who care about truth and about the power of truth are visibly graver with the thought of the hard problems that our generation must begin to solve. Hardly the Reformation itself presented before men more difficult or more serious questions. We shall not live perhaps to see the end; for it will be half a century before the real matters at issue are clearly disentangled. But it has been long foreseen—foreseen by Arnold among others—and it is now already at hand. Can any man whom Providence has put within the reach of education, altogether avoid the discussion? Surely not.

It will be the duty of some, as time goes on, to take a distinct part in these discussions. It will be the duty of others not to take part, but to show by their countenancing one side or the other which, as far as they can judge, is on the whole in the right. It will be the duty of others to stand still more aloof, but even they cannot be set free from the duty of standing aloof with knowledge, of seeing the gravity and seriousness of the issue, of abstaining, at any rate, from indulging in foolish language, in groundless assertions, in hasty conclusions, in unjust judgments on either side.

And as in religion, so also in secular life, there are questions put to us which must be faced. The political questions of our time, so far from being unimportant, so far from not demanding the utmost care in judging of them, are as serious as any that have had to be decided since the Revolution. Every educated Englishman must have a voice in the decision of the answer to be given to these questions. Some may have not a voice only, but a very large influence. And those who are justified in standing aloof are not justified in treating the questions on which so much of their country's future well-doing and dignity depend as trifles of no importance.

So again social duties, the mere duties of good neighbourhood, the relations of rich and poor, the degree in which we can help each other, the danger that in trying to help we may do hurt instead of good, all these are as serious as ever. The smoothness that has come over society has not made these duties trivial, nor even easier to do than they were before.

All this is far off from some of you. Controversies religious and political belong to maturer years. It would be foolish now to try to touch such serious questions with minds uninformed, with knowledge deficient, with logical faculties untrained. Yes, it would. But still you see this life before you, and it is well that you should see it; for if you are to play your part in it when you reach it, you must begin to get ready for it here.

Two things you have to do here, and both depend on the true nature of that which you will have to do by-and-bye.

In the first place, one of the great needs of this day is not only hearts devoted to God's service, but heads trained to clear insight. We want not only men who can act, but men who can think. It is said, and said with much truth, that party spirit is dying out; that almost all men are agreed on the great outlines of what has to be done, and the differences are only about the means and about the minor questions. There is some truth in this. But it is only half the truth. What is true is that we no longer now have to do battle, at all in the same degree as our fathers had, with mere prejudices on either side. We do not need, therefore, near so much dogged will and obstinate perseverance against hard opposition. But we constantly need real thought, the eye to see what is right, the trained intellect to lay hold of the truth which it may be both sides are equally seeking. On many social, on many political questions, the general aim to be aimed at is no longer discussed. But all turns on the steps by which we are to reach it. And hence the thoughtful man has a more important part to play than ever before. Take, for instance, the important question of raising to a higher level the lowest classes of our countrymen. There is probably not a man in England who would not wish to do it, if he could see how. The question is, how? And to answer that question requires the cultivation of the intellect as much as any similar question ever did before. Such questions abound in our day; and if we are not getting ready to do our part, however small a part, to give them the right answer, we are certainly unworthy to belong to a school where Arnold lived and taught.

But if one special need of our day is trained heads, so still more is a serious purpose. No nation, no Church, no family can long go right, can avoid unhappiness, and perhaps downright sin, where life has nothing in it but the pleasure or the vanity or the ambition of the day. But if so at any other time, still more so now. The evils that have to be faced require quite as much determination, quite as much devotion, as any evils ever yet required; but they require also a perseverance which hardly any others ever did require, because they do not confront us face to face, but, half hidden behind what is good, they tire out those who attack them by eluding the attack. And besides evils to be confronted, there is so much to be done that will be more naturally called work to be finished, and what work ever yet was done if the labourer brought with him no earnest will to do it?

And how shall you get that earnestness in after life? By beginning here. This day, Arnold's memory, the good name of your own body, all these are given you to stir you up to begin your service at once. For you must learn here to have a devoted will and a serious mind; and, believe me, both will be wanted in the world for the work that God has given us to do.

June 12, 1864.

SERMON V.

DIVINE POWER OF THE BIBLE.

ST. MATTHEW vii. 29.

'For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.'

THIS was the impression made by our Lord on those who heard Him teach and preach. He spoke as if He had a right to be heard, as if He had a message to deliver, as if His declaration of the truth were enough. Other teachers appealed, and of course were bound to appeal, to a higher authority equally open to their hearers. Other teachers rested their teaching on deductions from the Old Testament, on appeals to great names of past time, on the traditions of the elders. But He used all arguments and all appeals to Scripture and all usage of older teaching as subordinate to His own mere declaration of the truth. He claimed the power to reveal the living truth of God directly and not as an inference from the words of any other authority than His own. And He not only claimed this; but He made His hearers feel that His claim was just. As they listened they knew that He had a right to teach so, though other men had not.

St. Luke in expressing precisely the same thing uses a different phrase. St. Matthew says, 'They were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority.' St. Luke says (iv. 32), 'They were astonished at His doctrine, for His word was with power.' And plainly the phrase 'with power' is used to express the force with which His authority made itself felt. They could not escape the conviction as they listened that the authority which He seemed to claim was really His.

Just what distinguishes our Lord's teaching from the teaching of uninspired teachers distinguishes the Bible from all other books. It speaks with authority. Other books may teach the truth; other books may give precepts of holiness; may give examples of excellence. Other books may set before us the loftiest, the purest ideals; may demonstrate the truth of their teaching by unanswerable arguments. Other books may appeal straight to our consciences. But the characteristic of the Bible is not merely the truth which it teaches, the examples which it holds before the eyes, the ideals of life which it compels us to revere; but beyond all these the tone of supreme authority with which it speaks. 'If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost,' is the word which it has for the wilfully blind. 'If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you,' is the word which it has for the humble soul groping in the dark. But it is not merely that the Bible claims this authority. It compels the conscience to allow the claim. Other books sometimes claim authority unduly, but we brush aside their claim without much scruple. Other

teachers have before now fancied that they had a divine inspiration given directly from Heaven. But their claim has died away with their immediate followers. The Bible speaks with authority and it speaks with power.

Whence came this authority and this power? What do we mean by our conscious, and still more by our unconscious, acknowledgment of it? We mean that it is overshadowed by the presence of God. Just as the religious man is distinguished from the man of high moral character and from the man of excellent natural graces, by the ever-present sense of a relation to God running through all his life, just so the Bible is unlike all other books because it always seems to take us at once into God's presence. Not by any means that it professes to be, or seems as if it were dictated by God Himself. No, plainly enough it is written in human language; the thoughts are human thoughts; it is stirred by human feelings; it is addressed to human understandings. It is as thoroughly human as our Lord was man. But there is brooding over it, there is dwelling in it, a divine authority which makes it quite unlike anything else which the world has seen. We may ask whether we are to call the inspiration which we feel to be present in it miraculous or not. We may ask whether we are to suppose that every word in it is separately inspired, or that the inspiration is in the substance and not in the words, whether we consider its statements of fact to be guaranteed by God's authority, or only its teaching of religious truth and of the law of life. These are important questions. But before any one of these questions is asked, and after all these questions are

answered, still this divine character remains unaffected, this book alone takes the conscience straight in before the Throne of God and gives its lessons there.

When I read Plato I am reading the words of a religious man though a heathen. When I read Thucydides I recognise a man of lofty character and high tone though a heathen. When I read Sophocles I feel the power of natural beauty. When I read St. Augustine I am listening to a Christian, to a great preacher of the Gospel, to the very echo of inspiration. But in no one case have I risen above the human level. There is not the same claim to authority. There is not the same sense that such a claim would be just. Even St. Augustine, Christian though he is, and though the peculiar form of almost all religious thought in Europe is due to his teaching, yet seems rather to have been within the sanctuary and then come out with his message, than to be still speaking from within it. But the Bible never lets me feel that I am not standing in the sight of the Lord. It teaches very often precisely the same lessons. It tells me what I can find elsewhere. It requires of me what other teaching is quite as imperative in requiring. But it does more; it lays hold of the conscience as nothing else has ever done, nothing else can do. Other teachers bid me forgive injuries; and I am struck with the sentiment and examine keenly on what it rests. Our Lord bids me do the same; and my soul bows down. For He speaks with an authority which other teachers cannot claim.

In other ways we may have to modify our conception of the Bible. In other ways it may turn out not to be the

kind of revelation which we wish to have. In other ways we may have to find that God will not teach us as we choose, but as He chooses. And the danger of so changing our conception of the Bible always has been and always will be that the pulling up of the tares may pull up the wheat, and that because we are not taught in the way in which we expect to be taught we shall refuse to be taught at all. There was no doubt very real danger to many religious men when first astronomers began to maintain that the earth rolled round the sun. And from the same sort of danger we have no right to expect to be free. But that which holds the soul fast is the deep conviction that whatever else God has seen fit to make His word, this at any rate He has given to it always, and this nothing has ever permanently shaken, namely, its power to reach the conscience of man and make him bow before his Maker.

How comes this sense into the soul, and how can it be kept fresh and vigorous? By studying to live in the spirit of the Bible. Little does he feel it who rarely opens the Bible, and never applies its teaching to his own life. Little did those submit to our Lord's authority who merely listened as to a strange novelty or did not think it worth while to listen at all. Little was it to the fanatic, to the profligate, to the worldly, that He spake as never man spake. And so it is little to him who never reads or never cares about the Bible, with what kind of voice it speaks. But the character of what the Bible teaches can only be learnt in one way, and that way is summed up in one word, Try. The teaching of the Bible, as

Coleridge once said, is not a philosophy, nor is it a set of rules. It is a life. You cannot appreciate it by merely trying to understand it; you cannot know it except by trial. But if you try it; if you become familiar with it as the storehouse not only of precepts and principles, but of living spiritual power; if you learn to know not merely its separate commands but its drift and aim; if you study it till you have a sense of what is the unity of its purpose from end to end, then more and more you will feel the truth of its claim to speak with authority and with power. Then your acknowledgment of its value as a revelation from God will be quite independent of any general change in what men think of its precise character. Then you will be untroubled by any controversies about literal correctness or substantial truth. Then you will recognise it as the Word of God in a sense that human fluctuations of opinion cannot reach. For it will speak more and more directly to the soul, and more and more will it guide and inspire the life, and more and more will it testify of Christ in Whose power it always speaks.

September 25, 1864.

SERMON VI.

THE SEVERITY OF GOD'S LOVE.

PSALM xciv. 12.

'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law.'

ON this, the last Sunday in Advent, I wish to say yet a little more on that subject on which, in different ways, I have been speaking for the last three Sundays, namely, the severity of the love of God. There is a love, as you know, there is a friendship, which degrades what it loves. There is a love which really seeks no more than the gratification of the instinct of companionship, and men will seek friends because they dislike to feel alone, because they dislike to act alone, because they want countenance in the pursuit of their pleasure, because they want to keep quiet over-busy thoughts, because they like to feel that they are liked, because they have been long used to their society. This, of course, is a sort of sham friendship; for it is really selfish, and no true friendship can be selfish. Yet, along with this there is sometimes found a real, though a poor sort of true friendship, capable of

some sacrifice, if not of much, sanctified by something of affection, purified by occasional deeds of devotedness.

For there is yet again another sort of love, which is by no means evil, but really good; and yet, for all that, is quite different in nature from the highest. This is the ordinary affection of ordinary friends: a real wish for each other's happiness; a real pleasure in sacrificing to each other's good and pleasure; a real enjoyment of each other's society, not for selfish reasons, not as a countenance to a life which the conscience condemns, but out of real sympathy of heart. And this, I say, is good, and in as far as it is pure and unselfish, it is very good. It must, from the nature of the case, form the great body of the affection which we bear to each other in this life; for though it is certainly not the highest kind of love, and though it must be ever kept in and controlled by a love higher than itself, if it is not to degrade and sully itself in the end, yet we are charged here with each other's happiness so much more directly and fully than with each other's holiness, that we must find in this lower love the chief expression of that deep and never dying bond of sympathy whereby God has made us all one.

And this love in its purity, in its absolute unselfishness, in its generosity, in its entireness of dominion over all relations with each other, is the type, the preparation, the beginning of that highest love with which God embraces us all. And this highest love is marked, I say, by its severity; for the absolute condition of it is that it will never rest contented till it has lifted up the man whom it

reaches to a level with itself. The lower love will often shrink from giving pain; nay, will rightly do so, unless it knows that the pain will purify; but not so the love of God. No suffering that we can suffer, no severity of punishment, no bitterness of remorse, no accumulation of miserable consequences shall that love spare us in the pursuit of its purpose to lift us up to itself. God, it is true, promises happiness, such happiness as nothing that this world can give shall ever convey for a moment to the soul. But it is not to be happy that His love calls us, nor is it only, or even chiefly, by the thought of pleasure or of rest, of success or of praise, that He draws the soul of man. To such wishes He does appeal, for He made nothing in man without a purpose, and the longing for rest when we are weary with self-conflict, and the longing for joy when we feel parched up and dried by the hardness of life, and the longing for sympathy in our labours, and the longing to feel a thrill of happiness when pleasant emotions have, for whatever reason, been rare; yes, and the delight of young enjoyments and of freshness and healthy excitement,—all these, though they belong to not the highest region of our nature, yet shall do their part, if we will let them, in bringing us to God. For whenever we enjoy the most, then the promise of God is ready, that the joys of His presence shall be still more delightful; and whenever we long most keenly, then comes the assurance of the conscience repeating the assurance of the Bible, that no longing, however passionate, shall not be satisfied when once we come home to Him. But still this is not the sole nor the chief attraction whereby God draws men

to Himself. He promises men victory over themselves, and opportunity of self-devotion; He promises a higher nature; He promises an excellence which, as yet, they cannot dream of; He promises a life of self-control and of earnest endeavour; of large-hearted self-denial; of feelings pure and strong; of truth and uprightness; of loyalty to the one perfect King; of power over the slightest thought and wish; of a whole nature redeemed and purified and transfigured—transfigured into a likeness of Himself. Judge if this be not a love awful in its severity. And if we hold back and feel that we cannot rise to so great a height, and if there is nothing attractive to us in being asked to climb these heavenly heights, He can wait. But meanwhile He will not cease to call us; He will not cease to pursue us with the same love, with the same unchanging purpose to make us like Himself. And so He will send sharp pain, and He will baptize us with the baptism of fire; and so will He force us to see what is the higher and what is the lower; and teach us, by chastening, whatever we will not learn by self-devotion. His love *cannot* be content to leave us to be mere creatures of our own appetites and passions; of the whim of the moment; or of the besetting sin which has fastened on our souls; or of a mere worldly purpose. There is no such thing as forgiveness without cleansing; and the cleansing is in itself the punishment of the sin which it cleans. The question of the Prophet, 'Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope,'—this is not addressed only to those who do not belong to Him, and who deserve

a final rejection, but to His own children too, in proportion as they need the purifying fire. There is no such thing as forgiveness without cleansing; and repentance, in spite of all the promises that attend it, is ever like a sharp sword through the heart, if it be genuine, and heals a man with a healing that scathes as it heals.

Human love, I said before, must be controlled ever by such love as this. No human love is true which puts the lower above the higher, or drags down what it loves from the path of honour or of duty. Nay, more than this, human love may often, must sometimes, be the messenger of divine, and inflict pain. Parents must correct their children, and are false to their love if they neglect to do so. Friends, though equals, yet are often bound to discountenance their friends in what is wrong, and are false to friendship if they do not. But human love has its limits. The friend is often bound to remind himself that his friend is responsible to God, and not to him; and that if he assume a place that does not belong to him, he may hurt where he wishes to bless. But there are no such limits to the love of God, and from that love we cannot hide ourselves, nor refuse to acknowledge its right to interfere. And that love, while it is full of the tenderest tenderness, and the most merciful pity, and the gentlest allowance for all weakness, and the softest graciousness, and the warmest sympathy, yet it never will, for it never can, relax in its high purpose of making us nobler and purer, and more loving and more like God.

And so it is that those who have been most touched with a sense of this have not prayed to be spared, but

rather the contrary. The weak soul, when it has sinned, begs hard not to be punished; and who shall say anything hard of this natural weakness, cowardly though it assuredly is? But the soul that knows what God's promises are prays rather for any punishment, any severity that shall cleanse away the stain, that shall make relapse impossible, that shall burn into the very being a hatred of the sin. And so again, those who have learnt the blessing of being brought nearer to God find few things for which they are more thankful than the severity which has scourged them into a knowledge of the truth. 'I will thank the Lord for giving me warning,' says one Psalm. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest,' says another. 'I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me,' says another. 'The Lord scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,' says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Anything, everything is welcome to those men which makes them more and more the true sons of God, which refines them to that purity which they themselves delight in; anything, everything is welcome. Come pain, come repentance, come self-conflict, come humiliation, come disappointment, provided only it do its proper work of bringing them nearer to God. So, too, once more, do men most deeply feel what is the meaning of the death of Christ. He suffered for us indeed, but that suffering is all strange to us till we begin to suffer too, till we, too, learn the power of pain and learn to value it. Then, though it may be we cannot say why, nor put our knowledge into human language, we learn how the suf-

ferings of Christ pass into our souls, and chasten us into a love of holiness.

This we may consider the last Sunday in the Christian year. Next Sunday, with Christmas Day, we recommence the memories of the life of our Lord. This is the last Sunday of the Christian year; we are about to leave that year, and begin another. The season of Advent is like the eve of a great festival; the preparation of the previous night for the due celebration of the great day that is coming. And every year ought to bring us round once more to the same thoughts, the same duties, the same hopes, the same resolutions; the same, and yet not the same, for they ought to be transfigured to a higher character. We ought to begin with surrender to the will of God; and where shall we end but in surrender to the will of God? We ought to begin with hunger and thirst after righteousness; and where shall we end but with hunger and thirst after righteousness? It is the law of Christian life that the end shall be but the repetition of the beginning. But yet we ought not to be now just where we were last year. Whatever was then a vague wish should now have become a steady purpose. Whatever was then only hoped should before this have been actually begun. What was then a resolution of the will should now have become a habit of the life. Is it so, or is it not so? And if it be not so, what prayer shall we offer to God?—what other prayer than that by whatever way He think best, by pain if it must be so, by chastisement if it must be so, by humiliation, by fiery trials, if no other power can do, He will bring us to Himself, and prepare us to stand the severity

of His judgment? Yes, we will pray rather to have that than to be kept away from Him, rather to feel the full severity of His deep, deep love, than not to be embraced by the love itself. For we know in the bottom of our hearts that it is this very severity which makes God's love so bright, so thrilling, so tender, so deep, so everlasting; and we cannot, no, we cannot wish that it were otherwise.

December 18, 1864.

SERMON VII.

PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR.

1 ST. JOHN iv. 18.

'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.'

THIS is one of the passages which make us feel what severity resides in the perfection of love. Can any Christian read it without something like a doubt in his own mind whether perhaps after all his love is not altogether of the wrong sort? Can any read it without feeling that it seems to require something unattainable? Are we indeed to be so pure, so heavenly, that we shall be bold in the day of judgment and have nothing whatever to fear? That we should be bold for each other is intelligible enough. That when a Christian dies his friends should feel a sure confidence that he is a true servant of God, and should never have a doubt of his acceptance, and should think of him as already in the presence of Christ, and should be bold for him even at the judgment day,—this seems natural. But every man knows of himself what no one else can know; and it does seem

strange that any man should be expected to have no fear as he thinks of his own appearance before that last court from which there is no appeal.

The fact is, that the highest of all love has in it a most terrible severity, a severity which would crush those whom it loves under the burden of requirements beyond their strength were it not joined to tenderness absolutely infinite. There may be love which is content that what it loves should never rise to higher perfectness, should be faulty and worth very little. But not so the love of God. This lower love has its place no doubt, and is good as far as it goes. It upholds in trouble, in weariness, in perplexity; it sweetens life; it renews courage; it very often does more for a man than anything else that man can do for man. But this is not God's love; God's love draws us upwards. He *will* have us climb up to Himself. He *will* push us through trials, and through punishments, and through pain, and through perhaps even sin, out of our own narrow and weak and low selves to a higher and purer nature. God will have us happy, but first of all He will have us holy. And therefore His love, though infinite, is ever touched with a severity which, if it were alone, human nature could not bear.

St. John is here describing to us the Christian ideal. Not that he thinks of it as unattainable: not by any means. But he knew as he wrote quite as well as we do, that no one would read his words rightly without a thrill of awe. To be bold in the day of judgment! Can it be that men are to live so that they shall be bold in the day of judgment! Has any man ever so lived?

We look closely to see what qualifications he makes to this. It is something that he goes on to say, not he that feareth doth not love, but he that feareth is not made perfect in love. There is love even when there is fear: not perfect love indeed; perhaps very far from perfect: yet real love; love which unites the heart to God. It is something, too, that he does not here in his immediate context speak of love as keeping God's commandments. It is something, too, that he does elsewhere acknowledge that Christians sometimes sin. But when we have said all this, yet still remains the sense of a requirement almost beyond all human power.

The true counterpart of this requirement is God's infinite tenderness. He is not tender with sin; He will never be content that any wrong, however trifling, shall stain the soul of one who belongs to Him. But He is infinitely tender with sinners. Great as is His requirement; so great, too, is His patience, His long-suffering, His unwearied kindness. Whatever allowance can possibly be made for our weakness, for our ignorance, for the impediments to holiness which we have inherited, for those which our own faulty lives have created,—all this shall certainly be made. And to assure us of this, though of course God Himself could have made such allowance for us, yet that we might not merely know, but feel its certainty, men are to be judged by the man Christ Jesus. God gives the sinner time to recover himself, strength to repent, divine impulses breathing in his soul—yes, even in many a soul where other eyes cannot see them—exhortations, examples, the aid of ordinances

and sacraments; light, opportunities, occasional relief from all temptation; God provides means every way for our coming back to Him. No man ever yet repented without finding repentance far easier than he had expected. But, at last, we ought to end with loving Him too much to fear; or at the least, at the very least, we ought to feel that our love is of that kind which could grow into the love that casteth fear out.

Now I have chosen this subject for this afternoon for two reasons: one is because we read the passage from St. John in the Epistle this morning; but the other, and my chief reason, is because the love with which we ought to be ready to meet God in the other world is the same in kind as that with which we ought to meet our parents when we go home.

The love of a father is an illustration in every way of the love of God. A father must wish above all other things that his son should grow up to be an honourable, thoughtful, conscientious man. He *cannot* be content that a son of his should be merely a pleasant inmate of his house; he cannot be content with such a love as we may suppose the lower animals to give their young; he *cannot* but be anxious for his son's character as well as for his happiness. He loves: and partly of course he loves with that lower love which by God's ordinance binds men to each other more perhaps than anything else. But he cannot be content with that. He is, even if he does not think it himself, God's representative to his own children; and he must wish for something more than to see them happy for a little while. Now what is

the love which a son ought to have for his father in return for this? Plainly, the love that casteth out fear.

Now if it happen that a son have done nothing wrong to make him fear his father's anger; if his faults have been such as his father will at once pass over as no more than human weakness, such as his father will not think twice about; or even if they be such that will make his father sorry but will not vex and sting him, will not make it painful to look in his son's face, will not stop his smile or his warmth of welcome,—then it seems all easy enough. This, no doubt, is best; this, too, is best when we go to our true home, when we quit this school which we call the world and go to our rest in heaven. It is best to have kept the heart so innocent and pure; to have purified the life so entirely from all that degrades; to have been so true and just; to have looked up to God so constantly as to know that when we step into His presence, though there will be much in us that is faulty, it will not for a moment cloud the welcome on the Redeemer's face or sadden His voice. And so surely will it be with some of the saints. They will feel awe but not fear; they will veil their faces in reverence, but they will not shrink away.

But what if a son have fallen into sins which he knows will grieve his father to the heart; which will sadden him; will make him, if not withdraw, yet lessen his trust; will somewhat change his eye and the tone of his voice? Shall the son still have no fear? Yes, still. Still, in return for his father's love he should know that no one else has as much right to know all that he has done; no one else can be or will be so true a friend; no one else, after all,

has so deep a tenderness; no one else will give so sure an aid; no one else will be so anxious to make allowance; no one else will forget it so entirely when the stain of it shall have passed from the character; no other love will be so entirely restored. And just this is the love that a Christian who has sinned still feels towards the God whom he has offended. He has offended, deeply, repeatedly; but still there is no other judge to whom he would rather go. Terrible as is God's justice, yet he would rather put himself into God's hands than into any other. He has sinned and he knows it; he has lived a poor life; he has done but little service; his character is all stained and scarred with sins against which he has too weakly struggled; he has done evil that he has never been able to mend; he has made himself but a poor creature. But yet he would rather put himself into God's hands to suffer whatever God thinks fit; to be placed wherever God shall see best to place him; to be judged by God's judgment, than to be separated from God and given to any other judge, or left to himself. He has reason to fear, but his fear is not of the sort which will make him wish himself away. He fears, but in spite of the fear he would rather come than not. He fears just as many a brave soldier trembles with fear when he is going to battle, whilst a strong courage overmasters his fear and carries him onwards. He fears, but it is not a fear that hath torment in it; a fear that tries his love, but not a fear that lessens it. He fears, and yet his fear shall not prevent his love from being, if not quite, yet all but perfect.

For it is not this fear of which St. John was thinking.

He was thinking of the fear which would hide away if it could; which would prefer to be anywhere else; would prefer a different tribunal, a different judge; a fear which cannot see that it is coming to a father's face, and thinks that God is a terrible lawgiver and nothing else.

It may be indeed that a Christian shall feel his sins to be such as to deserve death; it may be that a son shall feel something of the same sort. A son may perhaps feel unwilling to face his father's look; yet the love of a son ought to prefer even then to tell his father everything and to be punished by him rather than by any one else. That sort of love which says, 'Anything from thy hand, anything inflicted by thy love, rather than the lightest punishment from any other;' that is the love which an erring son owes to his father, that is the love which a sinful Christian owes to his Father in heaven. To the true Christian, however sinful he may have been, it is yet a comfort that God knows all things: for God will help him out of his sin; God will be more patient with him than any one else can be; God will judge him more gently than any one else can judge him. To God he will wish to go. Yes; if his sins bow down his soul in shame, still he will rather go to God with them, for there only can it be truly known how deep is his penitence, how earnest have been his struggles, how true his longing to be healed. That in any Christian's soul is the last thing to go, namely, the turning to God in the thoughts and in the heart, and when that is gone, he is, at any rate for the time, a Christian no longer.

And if, then, you would wish to learn this kind of love,

you are going where you can practise it. The same character which makes God the chief of friends, the true support, the last, the surest, the absolutely certain reliance, that is the character which finds in a father's care, in a mother's love, the affection to which all is laid open, faults, and follies, and blunders; the worse they are the more surely told, because to a character of that sort it is ever the greatest comfort that those who love and have the right to chide should know everything that can be told. And it is by coming to a father or a mother with the full tale of life, whether good or evil, that the young Christian learns to come to God, in spite of all faults, and to feel that whatever sin and whatever sorrow may weigh down the soul it is a comfort that God knows everything.

June 18, 1865.

SERMON VIII.

APATHY ONE OF OUR TRIALS.

GALATIANS vi. 9.

'And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.'

WHY should men be weary in well-doing? Why should enthusiasm die out and zeal wax cold? Why should the difficulty of going on be to many men so much greater than the difficulty of beginning? It is not always so. Some men can go on if they do but begin; and all men find this in particular matters, though not in the whole conduct of their lives. But most men do experience this weariness, and men, too, of real and genuine metal, whose beginning was quite sincere, whose will seemed finally fixed, whose reason was certainly convinced, whose hearts were stirred to the depths. Not without good ground does the Apostle here warn the Galatians, and in another Epistle the Thessalonians, not to be weary in well-doing. So, too, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that we are Christ's house if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. So, too, our Lord Himself, twice over in the course of his ministry, warns His disciples that 'He that shall endure unto the end, the same

shall be saved.' It is undeniably one of the trials of the Christian; perhaps the most universal of all trials. Why should it be so?

It is so because, as in everything else, so in our spiritual growth we are inevitably disappointed in much of our expectations. This disappointment is so common that it is hardly possible to consider it as anything but a part of the constitution of the world, a part of the training which we have to go through, a thing to be expected and to be borne, and to be borne cheerfully. Whether we fail in getting what we wish, or get it and find it very different from what we had fancied, or lose all care for it in the very act of getting it; whether we fail in becoming what we wish, or become what we wish and then wish that we had had a quite different aim; it is so common to find this disappointment, that, without speculating why we are tried in this way, it is impossible to deny that much of our duty lies in bearing and in using this particular trial.

The trial extends to a very large part of life. But the words which I have taken from the Epistle to the Galatians refer to one form of it only, namely, the temptation to get disappointed in the service of God, and therefore weary of it. And of this I would speak.

For this temptation is no sign at all that the man so tempted is therefore not a true servant of God, though this very often is the first thought that enters the mind. It is natural to think, 'How insecure, how shallow, how useless are all my prayers, all my resolutions, all my high flights of aspiration! I resolved, and prayed, and devoted myself to God. I came to the Lord's Table. I there

begged most earnestly for help. I saw many faults in my life, and I resolved with all my heart that I would watch myself and get rid of them. And now I am already feeling tired; all my zeal is gone; all my earnestness has evaporated; I feel as if I did not really care about the matter. I have tried, really tried, to do better, but I do not see that I have made any progress; and somehow or other I seem to have lost all real desire to make progress. My original resolution must have been weak, shallow, worthless. There could have been no stuff in it. It would not have worn itself out within me by this time if it had been genuine.' This is a very natural thought, and when added to the sense of weariness, out of which it springs, it seems like a positive invitation to give up all the high hopes that we once had, to acquiesce in spiritual defeat; not, perhaps, to be reckless and plunge into all sorts of wrong, but at any rate to try no longer for what appears to be out of reach. But however natural may be the thought, it is a mistake. The weariness is no proof at all of such want of depth as condemns our original resolutions, and bids us sit down contented without trying to be anything better or nobler than we are. Our resolutions, our wishes, our aims were right enough. Our prayers were most certainly heard. Our zeal is not to be called shallow because it has lost its heat. Our battle is not to be called false because we are tempted to give it up. No; this weariness is one of the appointed trials which beset all Christians without exception, some more, some less, but all in the course of time. It is no sin to feel weary; the sin is to be weary,

that is, to let the feeling have its way and rule our conduct. It is not true that because you have not won, therefore you have not really fought. It is not true that your repentance was a mere sham because you have fallen again. It is not true that coldness proves that your exertions are useless. This coldness besets all men, and you will not escape.

The fact is, that we expect a kind of fulness of satisfaction in God's service which we do not get nearly so soon as we fancy that we shall. We expect that when we really try to please Him we shall find our hearts quite filled with such depth of contentment that we shall need nothing else. And that no doubt He will give to all his servants at last; perhaps even in this life; but most certainly He does not give it soon. He gives real hearty pleasure in well-doing for a short time. You shall have, if you are honestly walking in God's ways, and you shall have often, the glow of heart which follows acts of hearty self-sacrifice, and deep thankfulness which follows temptations resisted, and the consciousness of self-mastery which belongs to the man who compels himself to be sweet and cheerful when he is irritated, and the sense of loving-kindness which is the reward of service to your fellows; all this you shall have in its place: but abiding calm satisfaction, freedom from all weariness, perfect steadiness of will, pleasure in duty and in the results of duty, that you shall not have till your faith has been proved, not by trials without only, but by severer trials within, and especially by the trial of your perseverance, in spite of your own want of warmth.

Every time that we return here after the holidays is of course a great opportunity. But we have had many such opportunities. Even those who come here now for the first time yet most certainly have had similar marked points in their lives. And now, perhaps, we are all balancing between the two feelings. On the one hand, here is a new chance. We are not in the old groove any longer. We can choose again. We can take a new line if we will, and we can do it with ease. Let us make a new effort; let us start right this time, and perhaps we shall yet win; let us see whether this half-year we cannot keep down, by main force if necessary, the faults that once tormented us, and used to sting our consciences. But, on the other hand, we have made resolutions before; we have prayed to keep them; and what has become of them? Some of our faults have passed away; we seem to have grown out of them; but others are just where they were. Let us make no more of these useless efforts. We have tried, and we are weary of trying. What is the good of efforts to fly if we have no wings? Let us be content to be what nature made us. It is weary work ever trying to mend what seems to be incurable. If our tempers be unamiable, it is the composition of our nature; if our wills be indolent, if our hearts be cowardly, if our characters be selfish, we are such as we were born, and we cannot change what is bred within our very selves. We have tried, and we are tired of trying. We will not go regularly wrong, but we will not trouble ourselves to make resolutions and efforts which we know by experience to be useless.

These balancings, these waverings, are natural now. But in reality there ought to be no balancing or wavering at all. Though we feel roused by the mere fact that we are to begin afresh, yet we feel also weary; but this weariness is only the natural trial of our Christian course. Granted that we have found resolution and prayer and the Holy Communion itself not enough to keep us from falling back; granted that we feel cold, and have no will to serve God any more; granted that we are tempted to be content as we are, and have no strong impulse to elevate our own character,—all this is but the hardening process which is to make our service firmer, surer, deeper; all this is the manner in which we are to be made independent of mere fluctuations of feeling; so that we shall learn at last to love and serve our Master, not because we are moved and stirred by some external impulse, not because God's minister has roused us for a brief moment, not because our lives have given us for a day or two a new opportunity, but because our souls are anchored on the truth, and we cannot quit the Lord whom we know. For God's service is not to be a fair weather service, rendered whenever hearts are warm, and our feelings keen, and all within the soul conspires to make right-doing easy; we must learn at last to serve God with steady persistency, whether the heart be feeling gloomy or merry, whether we are cold or warm, whether our faith is strong or faint, whether religion is pleasant or distasteful.

And be you sure that you are quite mistaken in your belief that former prayers and former resolutions have been in vain, and have produced no fruit because no

fruit is visible. For the larger part of all God's work is invisible. The movement of God's purposes is as silent as imperceptible, and yet as absolutely irresistible, as that of a shadow on the ground. It may be long, very long, before you see any result of your endeavours to come nearer to your Master. But it cannot be, it absolutely cannot be, that prayers to Him to lead you to Himself should ever be in vain or fail in any degree of winning your desire. Depend upon it, if you have striven ever so faintly to be a better man, though neither you nor any one else can see it, you are a better man; and nothing can undo that work except your fainting in the task and giving it up. Then, indeed, if you strive no longer, your former striving will soon lose all the good effect which it has had, and you will sink back to where you were, or perhaps to still worse. God chooses very often to answer our prayers for aid in our spiritual battle in such a way that we cannot perceive that we have been answered at all. He chooses very often that the time of warmth and earnestness shall all be spent in getting ready for the inevitable time of coldness that is appointed to follow. He chooses that we shall learn to persevere, even when we have lost all inclination to persevere. He chooses to delay our victory, even when it seems to us essential that we should win at once. But it is quite impossible that He should ever have turned a deaf ear to any one who called on Him, or that even the service which began so eagerly, and soon after ended so coldly, should have had no blessing from His Fatherly love.

'In due season we shall reap if we faint not.' In due

season we shall find that it has been worth while to persevere in trying to serve Christ; we shall find it by that surest of all proofs, that Christ Himself will enable us to serve Him better, and we shall have the blessing promised to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness—that they shall be filled.

August 27, 1865.

SERMON IX.

THE GLORY OF THE LAW AND OF THE GOSPEL.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 9.

'For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.'

THE glory of the Old Testament is, first, the glory of power. There was this glory in the revelation given to Moses. The power which brought the people of Israel out of Egypt in spite of determined foes holding them in overwhelming numbers; the power which compelled the Egyptians to yield, by strange and magnificent interpositions of Providence; the high hand and the stretched-out arm which brought the frightened fugitives across the Red Sea; this had a glory never to be forgotten in the Hebrew memory. The giving of the Law again, the thunderings, the voices, the strange sights, the awful presence, the face of Moses too, full of the very brightness of Heaven for men to look at; this was glorious, and the Hebrews ever after looked back on it with awe. And when we read the history now, our

imaginations cannot fail to be impressed with the strange, unearthly character of all that is told; the immediate presence of God, the sort of aid given by all nature to the chosen people, the obstacles that were swept out of the way, the birthday of a new nation among the nations of the earth, and that nation without any parallel before or since.

Once more, the glory of the Old Testament is not only the glory of power; it is also the glory of mystery. Everything has something mysterious in it. Every revelation points to something which is not yet revealed, something even more important than that which is revealed. The Old Testament is everywhere incomplete, everywhere expectant, everywhere promising a light which has not yet appeared, everywhere half hiding the very truths which it reveals. Types, and figures, and symbols, commandments which in themselves seem arbitrary and capricious, but point on to something else which shall explain their meaning; prophecies which refer to speedy fulfilments, and yet look beyond them to something else; hints of great doctrines, and not the doctrines themselves; hints of another world, yet no clear promise of it; so that, alone among all people, the Hebrews looked much more to the future than to the past, and history forms only half their literature, while prophecy forms the other half. To them peculiarly belongs the phrase 'for ever,' never so used by other ancient nations; to them belongs the undying expectation of the great Prince that is to deliver them—an expectation which only grows stronger with time; so that each prophet in succession paints the

picture of the expected monarch in stronger outlines. The future, the hidden, the secret, the dark,—that was always a chief part of the glory of the old Revelation.

Lastly, this glory of mystery was intensified by a third glory,—the glory of strangeness. The history is full of the extraordinary. Things happen quite out of the usual course. Even common events are on such a scale that they rank as uncommon. The plague of locusts was nothing new; but its terrible severity ranked it as a miracle. The murrain on the cattle was not in itself a miracle, but its happening just then gave it a miraculous character. Mystery in itself is quite consistent with what is familiar and common-place; there is much that is really mysterious in what happens every day; there are thousands of things which we cannot explain, however carefully we examine them. But though they are mysterious, yet the mystery does not affect us much, because it is so familiar to us. And so, too, much of the mystery of the Hebrew law was, no doubt, lost to the Hebrew people because they were familiar with it, and it ceased to raise any sense of astonishment. But this was not the case throughout. The sense of mystery was perpetually re vived by the sense of strangeness. The history was extraordinary; they felt that it was extraordinary; perpetually and involuntarily the writers burst into expressions which show how this sense of the strangeness of their history was always working in their minds; no other people had been so treated, so chosen, so guided, so taught, so punished, so blest. They were peculiar; they stood alone; they had been made unlike

all others. No other literature gives you this impression of a people who felt so deeply impressed with the strangeness of their own history. There are thoughts like it in Roman writings; but nothing to be compared with the reality, the force, the involuntary earnestness which mark everything of this sort that we read in the writings of the Prophets and in the Book of Deuteronomy.

This kind of glory most impresses all men at first. We need no education, intellectual or spiritual, to be awe-struck with power which deals with us as it will, or with darkness and mystery which we cannot penetrate, with strangeness which startles all our faculties. That which makes us feel our own helplessness is that which we find it easiest to reverence. No man can despise that which reduces him to nothing; and at first we not only cannot despise it, but it is the very thing which, above all other things, fills us with awe.

But what is good for the beginning is not good for the end. In all God's teaching we find one law, that nothing shall stand still. And so the glory of the New Testament is not the glory of the Old.

There is in the New Testament power; for where God comes near to man, the utter weakness of man must be visible: and there is mystery; for in a Divine revelation there must be much that cannot be comprehended by human intellect: and there is strangeness; for, after all, the incarnation of our Lord is in itself a thing more utterly strange than all else which history records. But it is not in the power, nor in the mystery, nor in the

strangeness that we find the glory of the New Testament. It is emphatically not in the power, for the very motto of the New Testament is, 'My strength is made perfect in weakness;' nor is it in the mystery, for St. Paul expressly, in this very passage, makes it a part of the greater glory of the New Testament that 'We use great plainness of speech;' and it is not in the strangeness, for we are forbidden to say, 'Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down from above, or who shall descend into the deep to bring up Christ again from the dead, inasmuch as the Word is nigh thee even in thy mouth and in thy heart?' The glory of the New Testament is to be seen in the weak man, who holds fast against severe temptations; in the single-hearted man, who, though he understands little, yet loves much; in the quiet, obscure man, who lives no strange life, but is content with whatever God gives him to do.

Now, this glory of the New Testament does need a real education to enable us to value it: not, indeed, an education of the intellect, but an education of the spirit. There is not in it anything to strike, anything to command admiration; there is nothing in it heroic; till we know it well, there does not seem to be in it anything saintly. For even the saintly character, as estimated by our half-cultivated judgment, is valued rather for what in it seems unearthly, than for what is really heavenly. And it is a real step in our Christian lives when we can see how far the glory of the Gospel stands above the glory of the Law.

For, indeed, the truth is, that we are slow to learn how much of the power of God, how much of the spirit of

heaven, how much utterly unlike earth, is contained in a humble Christian life, which makes no show at all.

We do not appreciate its difficulty. It seems always in our power to do right; yes, in a rough sort of way it is. But to do right not only in the rough, but in the small particulars; to give that perfection to the details of life which alone shows the true excellence of the spirit; to be good, not in deed only, not in word only, but in thought; no one who has honestly begun to try it will long hesitate to acknowledge that no miracle is more utterly beyond human strength, no miracle more entirely proves the interference of God. No one who has honestly tried to live a really pure and true and unselfish life, pure in thought, true in word and in deed, unselfish in hopes as well as acts; no one who has himself honestly tried to make his life a hunger and a thirst after righteousness, will fail to come to a deeper conviction every day, that whatever has been made better in him has been made better by God, and that whatever remains to be done can be done only by the power of God. Assuredly there is more of the power and presence of heaven in truth told in spite of temptation, in perfect purity of body and mind, in cheerful self-denial, in anxious justice, in hearty obedience, in sweetness of temper, than in all the miracles that were ever worked. For if the wonders of the Old Testament show God's hand, these wonders show His indwelling presence.

There is a sort of goodness, no doubt, which may well seem common and earthly; there is a sort of good life which commands and rightly commands no great

admiration, for it is poor, and earthly, and commonplace in very truth. I mean the goodness which really has its source in mere external influences, and has no inner root at all; the kindness which is always kind when it is no trouble, and then only; the unselfishness which gives what it does not much care for; the truth which is never tried; the justice which satisfies the majority for the moment; the purity which keeps from gross sin; all that goodness which is put on us like a garment by society; all that which we learn simply by finding that if we have it not, our fellows will make us very uncomfortable. In all this I grant there is no glory at all; it is very common, it is very earthly. And because we are slow to distinguish between this and the goodness which God gives to those who seek for it, we are often unable to discern that true glory which the Apostle assigns to the New Testament. And so we are ever looking for something brilliant, something excellently good in all men's eyes, something that shall compel the world to gaze at it, something at least that shall seem worth doing, at any rate to ourselves, something that shall strike and thrill our imagination. And thus we miss the true glory of the New Testament, the glory, not of power, not of mystery, not of strangeness, but of godliness. This glory makes little show here on earth; very often is not seen at all; but from heaven the angels behold it shining like a star in the truly Christian soul, and to their eyes all other glory fades away before it.

O Christian, in your hour of temptation, in your daily trials, in the moment of uttering words from your tongue,

in the moment when conscience bids you see to your thoughts, remember that there is more of the presence of Christ in the choice which you make between right and wrong; there is more of Heaven, whether in the slight effort which is needed to keep you from sin at one moment, or in the strong control which is barely enough to save you from a fearful fall at another, than in all the magnificence which attended the giving of the Law at Sinai, or the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea. All that ancient glory was to pass away; the life that you live is a part of your immortal self. The glory of that was but God's garment; the glory of this is God's love.

September 3, 1865.

SERMON X.

GOD'S LOVE AS VARIOUS AS MAN'S NEED.

1 ST. JOHN iii. 1.

'*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*'

IF one were asked what was the especial characteristic of the Apostles and Evangelists who first preached the Gospel, what it was that supported them in their labours and against persecutions, what it is that seems to breathe through all that they write, there could be, I think, no other answer than this, that beyond all other men of whom we know, they were filled with the sense of the love of God as revealed in Christ. It is of course no more than can be said in some degree or other of every Christian. Every Christian draws his spiritual life from that same source, the conviction, namely, that God loves him, and that he may read the proof of that love in what Christ has done. But perhaps for that very reason the Apostles and first preachers had a double measure of this very feeling. It seems to be the inspiration of all that they say and do; and all that we know about them

carries this with it even in words and phrases and involuntary turns of thought.

Now, in order to deepen this impression in our minds, an impression which I suppose every one is quite sure to feel for himself the more strongly, the more often he reads the New Testament, it will, I think, be well to observe the different forms which this strong assurance takes in different minds. For the assurance of God's love is present in them all; wherever they speak of themselves and their own hopes, wherever they speak of what God has done, or is now doing, or will do hereafter, wherever they say anything of the past and its experience, the same certainty can always be traced—the certainty that God loves them, and that all that they go through is a proof of His overflowing love. But yet we can also see how this assurance takes different forms in different men, adapts itself to life, to character, to circumstance; wears one form in St. Paul, another in St. John, another in the Epistle to the Hebrews, another in St. Peter; while in all it still is the stay on which the soul rests, the power which upholds, transforms, uplifts, the voice of God speaking in the heart, in different languages, but with one meaning.

Thus in St. John God's love reveals itself in Christ the Purifier. Our Lord is the source of aspiration, of holiness, of purity. We know not yet what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him. Because we have this hope in us, because we know that this is our destiny, because we know that this is what God will do for us, therefore we purify ourselves. He takes away our sins; He was manifested for this purpose.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. In such words as these we read St. John's assurance of what the love of God would do for him. In his longing for unstained holiness, in his longing for unearthly purity, in his desire to be filled with love, in his desire that love should be so perfect as to cast out fear and give us boldness in the day of judgment, in his desire that our hearts should not condemn us and so that we should have confidence towards God, we see where he looked for, and felt certain that he should find, the love of God as manifested in Christ. This was what he felt sure that God's love could give and would give. Christ the purifier, Christ the life, Christ the truth, Christ the way, would bring His own to the Father and make them like Himself.

In St. Peter again the love of God is shown in Christian example. A plain and simple mind, fixed on plain duties, finding in the great law of right a supreme satisfaction, St. Peter seems to think of our Lord chiefly as showing us what we ought to be and do, and sent by the infinite love of God for that purpose. Do Christians find their duty hard? 'Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously: who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.' Or, again, are Christians persecuted? They are reminded that 'Christ also

hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.' And so throughout his writings St. Peter ever seems to think of God's love as upholding a man in doing what it is right to do, in bearing what it is right to bear, and Christ's life as the assurance of that love.

Yet again in the Epistle to the Hebrews Christ is ever the sympathiser, the man who was made like ourselves, the man who was touched with a feeling of our infirmities, the man who was tempted just as we are, who learned obedience just as we learn it, who is not merely an example, but a Leader, a Captain—one of us in every way, and yet all the while the very Son of God. Exhortation after exhortation in this Epistle ends with the reminder that our Mediator, our Captain, our High Priest, was one of ourselves, and that His sacrifice on the cross derived its power to set free the soul from sin just from this identity in nature with us. We have a strong consolation in the sure oath of God, and that consolation is fastened as by an anchor on the High Priest who has entered within the veil. We come boldly to the throne of grace because our High Priest was tempted just as we are. Here, as everywhere else in the New Testament, there is the same strong assurance that God will not forget His own people, that His love is too mighty to fail in saving; but that which the writer loves to dwell on as the chief ground of that assurance, is the human nature of the Redeemer in whom we believe.

Once more, in St. Paul Christ is the deliverance from sins in the past; He is the defender against sins in the future. God's love in Christ is emphatically that which

delivers the wretched man, beaten in all his endeavours to free himself from the body of this death of sin: it is that which has done through Christ what the law could not do, enabled the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled in His redeemed. If doubts or questions about ourselves ever cross the mind, the answer is, 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea, rather, that is risen again: who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' Over St. Paul's mind there ever seems to be resting the shadow of the memory of the past; he remembers how wrong he once went, what a terrible mistake he made He remembers the blood of St. Stephen, the persecution of the saints; the fierce zeal with which, believing that he was serving God, he went from city to city to extinguish. if he could the fire that God had kindled. And he remembers how, not by any reflection, not by any study of his own, but by the direct interference of Christ Himself, he first learned how fearfully wrong he was. Hence throughout his life there is present to him a sense of his own weakness. The thought crosses him, that after having preached to others he himself might possibly be a castaway. He prays to God to be delivered from the thorns in the flesh. He knows that all things are lawful for him, but he will not be brought under the power of any. He bids his hearers work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Yet while these thoughts some-

times come across him and make him more eagerly watchful over all that he does, nothing can shake his firm persuasion that 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' He, more than any other Apostle, sets before us the battle with evil in ourselves; he, more clearly than any other, teaches the mystery of original sin; he, more plainly than any other, bears through his life the marks of the conflict, and is still conscious of the weakness which that conflict leaves behind it. And to him therefore Christ is emphatically the power which wipes out the past, and which upholds the soul, the power which alone can preserve us blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose strength is made perfect in our weakness, 'who shall one day change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.'

Thus differently, according to the different needs and different circumstances of each man's life, does God reveal in the soul that sense of absolute trust in Him which is the very condition of our being able to approach His throne. It is not required that every man shall feel this trust in exactly the same way; but no Christian can live without having in some shape or other the support of this thought. If we are sinners and are groaning under the bondage that we cannot shake off, St. Paul tells us that even while we were yet sinners God loved us and Christ

died for us. If we are anxious and perplexed and harassed with the duties of our calling, and our burden seems heavy, and our tempers seem to fail, and our strength threatens to give way, St. Peter, with the earnestness of one who had staked all his life on his words, bids us think of Christ, who bore all and never flinched, and of that God whose love sent Christ to bear it. If we long for sympathy in temptations which none but ourselves know, or can know, Christ was tempted just as we are, and can understand our trouble. If we long for a more heavenly spirit, and it makes us unhappy to feel cold and earthly, and we seem to long for righteousness in vain, St. John bids us look forward with sure confidence to the coming of our Lord, whose very presence shall make us like Himself. The love of God is as various as the world which God hath made, and there is no state of mind and no circumstance of life to which that love will not fit its gift. The Christian, the longer he lives, the more sure he becomes that God has loved him from the very first; that not even his own many sins have quenched that unquenchable fire; that not even when his own heart was coldest and his thoughts most far from heaven, did God forget the creature that He had made; that even into grievous sin and even into strange hardness of heart did God's unwearied love pursue him and will pursue him yet. And so when the Christian thinks of himself he knows that he may fall; but when he thinks of God it seems impossible that God should let him. And in this thought he lives a more heavenly life, he cherishes a surer hope, he is more cheerful, he is more joyous every day.

For he knows that God loves him, and while this is present to his mind, he cannot go wilfully away. He is God's son; how can he quit his own Father?

Our human sight is short and dim. We cannot always look on beyond the present to God's sure purpose to give us His blessing. But all the more ought we to write it down as with a pen of iron on our own souls, that whatever else we read in the life of Christ, we read first of all, and above all, and through all, the assurance of the all-searching love of God. If the life be careless, bring back the mind to that; if the heart be unhappy or discontented, compel the thoughts to that; if the habits of our daily walk cause us many a conflict between conscience and inclination, anchor the will on that. For most certainly it cannot fail. God's love never can, and never did, and never will.

September 24, 1865.

SERMON XI.

HIGH AIMS IN LEADERS.

1 KINGS xii. 28.

'*Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*'

THERE are three great occasions in the history of Israel when the people took a great share in changing their rulers; not acting in any case altogether alone, but in each case exercising a powerful, and in the end a decisive voice. One of these was when the form of government was changed to a monarchy and Saul was made king; the second was when the house of Saul was finally removed from power and that of David succeeded; the third was when the people split into two parts, and the tribe of Judah remained under the dominion of Rehoboam, while the ten tribes set up Jeroboam, and formed a people by themselves. The conduct of the people on these three occasions, with the comments of the Bible upon it, illustrate in a remarkable degree the principles which ought to guide those who are in any sense members of a community.

When Saul was made king, the people are condemned

for their wish to change the government, but not for the king who was put over them. They were, in fact, at that time capable of something better than a mere ordinary monarchy. They had much excuse for their desire to have a different form of government; for Samuel had made the fatal mistake of putting his own sons into high office, and the government was distinctly bad. This would have justified them in complaining, and in insisting that Samuel should set right his error. But they were not content with that; to get rid of a temporary evil they descended permanently to a lower system. They determined to get rid not of Samuel's sons only, but of government by prophets altogether. They seem at that time to stand, as it were, on the entrance of better things. But the better things would not have come without much self-sacrifice, without cherishing an extraordinary earnestness of religious life, without, in short, the raising of the whole national life to a distinctly higher level. Things could not go on in the loose ill-regulated fashion which characterises the times of the Judges. There must be a change. And what change? The people chose that change which people in such circumstances have almost always chosen; the change which promised most security for property, most regularity of administration, most ease of life. Samuel's schools of the prophets and circuits of justice might perhaps have developed, if time had been allowed, into some very noble kind of free government. But the people were impatient. A government which governs always with a view to right, and to nothing else, implies a very lofty tone in the people, or a marvellous

political education. And the people of Israel had neither. They chose the easier, the lower, the more comfortable way. And they are blamed accordingly. But the blame is proportioned to the case. God does not withdraw His blessing from the people. The new state of things is a decided improvement on the anarchy of the days of the Judges. If the people did not choose what was highest, yet neither did they altogether sink. They were wrong in not rising to the higher level to which their circumstances called them. But that was all their wrong. In choosing their king they took the best guidance they could get, and having chosen him, they followed him loyally. They did not set up a king simply after their own inclinations. They did not say to Samuel, 'We will have a king, and this shall be the man.' They still acknowledged Samuel's fitness to intercede with God on their behalf, and, while practically dismissing him from his post, they never showed any ungenerous want of trust in his integrity. And so, in spite of the blame which attends their act, they are allowed to have their desire, and that, too, without any punishment for pressing it. The new kingdom is blessed. The days of David and Solomon are the great glory of the Israelite history. And after-ages looked back on these times as peculiarly favoured by God, and seemed to forget that the monarchy whose splendour was so striking ought not to have existed at all.

Saul and his son Jonathan fell in battle with the Philistines, and the whole country was so trodden under foot for the time that the monarchy for a little while may be considered as suspended. David had been

already marked out as the successor. Samuel had privately anointed him for the office, so that he must have known that it was intended that one day he should be king. But though this seems to have been quite private, the people generally, and, as we are expressly told, Saul and Jonathan, anticipated that some day or other, and somehow or other, David would be king. The fact is, he was plainly indicated by circumstances. No other man showed the same fitness. But yet neither he nor the people seem in any hurry to seize the crown on Saul's death. Judah, which was most exposed to the enemy, puts him on the throne at once, for they no doubt felt the need of having a leader without delay. But Saul's house retains all the north for seven years, and it is not till plain trial has proved that that family was unfit that David becomes king over the whole people. Here we have no fault to find. David was not merely the representative of stable government and of security from foreign aggression, he was already known as a servant of God. The people's conscience was satisfied, as well as their inclinations, when they chose him. His coronation did not merely provide them ease and peace and justice; it was a guarantee also for a religious court, for a devout observance of the law, for a godly example, for the cherishing of all that was best and purest and noblest in the people. He must have been already known as a religious poet. His character, such as we find it in the Psalms, must have already impressed all Israel with a sense that such a king would knit them more closely to God than ever. In all politics

there are higher aims and there are lower aims, and men have no difficulty at all in distinguishing between the two. Now certainly there was everything in David to satisfy the lower, but so was there also to satisfy the higher aims of the people. He was undeniably the best man they could get, and his government was blessed accordingly.

On the death of Solomon we come once more on a great crisis. Jeroboam is put forward, in some respects, just as Saul had been, just as David had been. Jeroboam had been told by a prophet that he was to be the future king of the Ten Tribes, and therefore might plead a divine warrant for all that he did. But when we read the history, the difference between him and either Saul or David is visible at a glance. Saul kept in the background when he was chosen, and even after the election went quietly home to wait till the need of him should be felt. David made no effort to possess himself of the throne till he was regularly invited. But from the first mention of him Jeroboam appears as the mere demagogue. He stands forward at once as the leader; and when he has gained his end, and sits on the throne, he thinks above everything else of his own security. No religious consideration stands in his way. He fears that the worship at Jerusalem may lead his people back to their old allegiance, so he sets up a new worship. And that he may make this more attractive, he degrades it by yielding to the weakness not yet cured in the Hebrew people, and sets up images of gold. This was of course lowering the whole character of the worship. It was a breach of a most solemn commandment. It was giving

up the very sheet anchor of that great revelation which especially marked the Hebrews as God's people. But from of old the Israelites had found it a great strain on them to worship without the aid of images, and he let them have what he knew would please many. For the same reason he seems to have changed the Feast of Tabernacles from the seventh month to the eighth. For the same reason, when he found the Levites not pliable enough for his purpose, he took priests from the people at large, any one who might choose to serve. It is impossible to mistake the spirit of all this. All the higher aims, all that is excellent and pure and godly, all that tends to purity of religion, is given up. The man cares for nothing but his own ends, and he leads his people to care for nothing better either. They hoped, no doubt, to have things more comfortable, and they were in the mood to care for little else. And he accordingly sacrifices all else. They probably had good ground for their complaint of Solomon. His great buildings all over the land were erected most likely by the aid of a considerable amount of forced labour; we have an instance in the thirty thousand men who were compelled to work by relays in Lebanon. Moreover, it seems probable that the taxation was not just; for in the districts of taxation mentioned in the fourth chapter of the first Book of Kings, Judah seems to be altogether omitted. So it is probable that the complaints of the people were reasonable. But what is plain in Jeroboam's government is this, that nothing higher is allowed to enter. To demand that unjust burdens shall be removed is right; to care for that, and for nothing else, is lowering

and dangerous. And accordingly this people distinctly took a step downwards at this time, from which they never recovered. They had some kings of considerable ability: Ahab, for instance, and Jehu; and Jeroboam II rose perhaps to what we call greatness. But they had no king whom we can call good; and the state of the people seems to have sunk from bad to worse. The description that their own prophets Hosea and Amos give of them is certainly far blacker than that which Isaiah and Micah give, nearly at the same date, of the kingdom of Judah. For the idolatry speedily and surely did its work. They began by degrading their own idea of God, and they ended, as was inevitable, by being degraded themselves.

What is the truth that we see in all this? And what have we to do with it?

We have to do with it in all that concerns our common life. Any who live together as parts of society, as members of a common church, as subjects of a common government, have each in his turn to lead and be led. Every man finds occasions where he must take the lead; where office, circumstances, the willingness of others to follow, mark him out as the leader. Every man finds occasions where he ought to follow another, and if he has any generosity he will be quite as ready to follow, if called to follow, as to lead if called to lead But on what principles shall he do either? What shall be his aim in each case?

Shall he seek advancement for himself and his friends? Shall his principal wish be to be popular with his fellows? Shall he care for what is right when it is popular, and because it is popular? Shall he put aside what is best

when it suits his own 'interests'? Shall he care first that he shall be the man to have the lead; and second, that the lead shall be in the right direction? Shall he make the attainment of lower ends the first condition of his seeking higher ends?

All through life we find illustrations of these questions; and the answers to these questions show whether we are guided by a Christian spirit in our dealings with our fellows. All through life it is so. These questions beset us in very small matters as well as in very great matters. There may be demagogues in a school as well as in a nation. There may be a care for what is most excellent in a society of a few hundred as well as in a society of many millions. The difference between making what is really just, or best, or most excellent the decisive consideration, and making what is pleasant, easy, comfortable; the difference between caring for high character, a pure tone, a noble spirit in the body to which we belong, and caring for what is most enjoyable, costs least effort, demands least self-denial,—that difference can be seen in small societies as well as large; is as important in one place as in another; separates true servants of God quite as much here as anywhere else. And assuredly the lessons that are learnt in this matter here are lessons that will last through life; and a boy at school as truly damages his spirit and character by choosing the lower aim at a critical moment as if he were already a grown man, and important interests depended on his choice.

October 22, 1865.

SERMON XII.

DOING OUR BEST.

2 CORINTHIANS viii. 12.

'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.'

THE Apostle is here speaking of the collection for the saints, and trying to combat that false shame which measures what it does in God's service, not by what is right, but by what others may expect, and is put to the blush if it seem to fall short, even when the falling short is justified by the facts. But he is only applying a general principle. The general principle is, 'Do your best, and no more is required. There is hardly a page of the New Testament in which this is not taught. In every possible variety of form the principle is applied to life. It is taught in one way in the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, where the willing mind which came in at the eleventh hour is put on a level with the willing mind which came in at the first. It is taught in another way by the widow's two mites, of which we read this morning. It is taught in another way by the parable of the Servant with the Talents, where each is accepted

when he brings a profit in proportion to what was given him. It is taught in another way in the praise given to her who anointed our Lord for His burial, inasmuch as she had done what she could. It is taught in another way in the doctrine of justification by faith, which makes the spirit, the heart, the will everything, and the deed in comparison nothing.

Do your best, and God will neither reject you nor forsake you. He will neither refuse to accept it, nor allow it to be fruitless. Even if you do not get the quick reward of your hopes in finding the right path easier, in finding God nearer, in finding your own heart warmer, still fear not and faint not; do your best in faith, and the appointed end will come; God will give you at last what He only refuses out of love at the first, the victory over evil in yourself, and the warmth in prayer, and the experience of Divine support, and the deep and ever-deepening peace which comes of feeling that you are upheld by Christ. Do your best, and you will soon find yourself happier and more cheerful, stronger and firmer, and calmer; and at last you will find a better fruit still in the assurance of the love of God.

But let us look closely at what is meant by this doing your best. For it is easy to say it and to fancy it when you are not doing it at all.

It is not doing your best to stop all effort just when effort begins to be severe. It is very natural to call this doing one's best. It is very natural to keep the temper to do the work of the day, to banish evil thoughts, to obey rules, to refuse to join others in wrong, just up to

the point at which all this begins to be hard, and then to fail, and to say that we have done our best. Whereas, on the contrary, it is quite certain that if we have made no painful effort; if, on looking back, we cannot see that we suffered at all in the struggle; if it has been all easy to resist temptation up to the point at which we resisted it no longer,—then it is nonsense to say that we have done our best. It has been remarked that the Epistles very rarely seem to imply a possibility that a Christian should commit a wilful sin. 'If a man be overtaken in a fault,' is the sort of language always used of the sins of Christians? It is, as it were, taken for granted that their sins shall be slips, infirmities, accidents, by which a man has been taken unawares. For, indeed, these are the sins into which men fall when they are really doing their best. It is indeed true that Christians very often do commit wilful sins; and it would be impossible to deny some of them the title of Christians, even of sincere, and perhaps very sincere Christians, and of loving Christians sometimes, Christians who, though very imperfect indeed, still do turn their faces to their Lord, and stretch out their hands to reach Him; yet we must deny their claim to say that they have done their very best. Doing your best means an effort which was continued until surprise or sudden weakness, or forgetfulness, or a sudden rush of temptation made you do what you honestly meant not to do. He cannot say that he has done his best who has fought no battle.

Yet, again, it is very natural to mistake sorrow afterwards for doing your best at the time. The feelings fluctuate. While the temptation is strong the conscience

is not supported by the feelings at all. When the sin is over, the longing to do right, or rather, to stand right, comes back with a rush. Then we are sorry, and we resolve very eagerly that this time shall be the last. And if this be the first time that we have so sinned, we do not attempt to deceive ourselves by pleading that we have done our best. We acknowledge that we have not done our best, and with great and sincere grief we resolve to do our best for the future. But after this has happened once or twice we begin to confound our pain after the sin with our efforts before it; and we say that we have done our best simply because we remember how much pain our sin gave us. To yield to temptation easily, and then to feel very much vexed with ourselves, and to persist in repeated falls and repeated sorrow, this is not doing our best, though, when we look back, it looks very like it. He is not doing his best who has given his feelings, and not his will, to his work. Wishing you had done right, wishing you could do right, this is not doing your best.

Yet, again, it is very natural to say you are doing your best while you are, notwithstanding, not using the commonest and easiest means to enable you to do it. A little experience of yourself tells you that there are certain temptations which are not wrong in themselves, but are dangerous to you; and again, that there are certain aids that you cannot safely dispense with. Now, if you walk into temptation, and then struggle very hard, and yet fall, it is absurd to say that you are doing your best. Doing your best would have been to keep

out of the temptation altogether. Or, on the other hand, if you refuse to use the means which God has provided for you, if you will not give your whole mind to your prayers, if you never pray for special aid in difficulties, if you rarely read the Bible, if you rarely cross-examine your own life, if you avoid serious thoughts, if you avoid serious conversation, if you avoid the society of those who really help you, if you never come to the Holy Communion, or if you take no pains to examine your own life strictly when you do come, then again it is absurd to say that you are doing your best; you are only half doing it; and half doing the best is not doing it at all.

So, then, it seems that the blessing promised on doing your best is no comfort at all. Doing your best is so painful, so difficult, so rare; requires such a bondage of watchfulness and self-examination and effort; leaves one in such doubt whether, after all, one has done one's best, or not, that it relieves no anxiety, lightens no care, lessens no labour, and is as severe a rule as that fearful Law which the Gospel has taken away from our necks.

No, not so. I do not deny that an unloving heart may turn this rule into a painful bondage by fixing the eyes, not on the spirit of it, but on the letter. It is possible for the spirit of the slave to enter the soul of the free man, and convert the rules of freedom into the tasks of bondage. It is possible for a son to treat the commands of a loving father as the tasks set him by a stern master, and to fear where he ought to love. But the rule is not a rule of bondage; nor is it as slaves that we are treated when we are bidden to do our best.

But on this matter there are two things to be said.

One is, that the law of the Gospel is not intended to be, and never can be, a rule of ease and self-indulgence, and negligence; the Gospel never teaches a sort of spiritual luxuriousness, whose enjoyment is that of fighting no battle, bearing no burden, making no effort. To ambition the Gospel promises, not the highest rewards, but the most difficult tasks. To love the Gospel offers, not shelter from suffering, but opportunities for self-sacrifice. To repentance the Gospel gives, not the removal of temptation, but strength to meet it. Not to the ungenerous spirit that refuses toil, not to the selfish soul that longs for heaven simply for its ease, not to the desire for victory that has cost no straining, for the prize that has been won without a race, does the Gospel give its laws. The Gospel thrusts aside the Law; but why? Not because the Law asked men to do much for their God, or put too high a value on the rewards that were to be won; but because it let men work on all their lives without bringing men to God in the end; because it was a barrier and a hindrance in their approach to Him; because it was uninspired by love, and unsupported by the sense of God's presence, and unsweetened by the knowledge that we were dear to His heart. Not to make life easier, but to make it larger and nobler, to fill it with power, to inspire it with heavenly thoughts—that is the purpose of the teaching of the New Testament.

Secondly, there is no need, in applying this rule to our lives, to allow a spirit of anxiety to creep in between us and our Redeemer. Not only is there no need, but it is

wrong and unloving. For the one question is, Are you honestly doing your best? Do you yourself, in your own heart, believe that you are? The different forms of self-delusion which sometimes deceive people into saying that they are when they really are not, will not deceive any one who fairly puts the question to himself, and is determined not to be so deceived. These delusions only blind the eyes of those who are not really in earnest in seeking for an answer. But if you really care to know whether you are doing your best or not, you cannot be long deceived. And there is no need to cherish anxiety: the promise is given, not to make you anxious, but to give you strength, and to assure you that your efforts are not in vain.

Whatever be your difficulty; whether you find it hard to keep your tongue in due control; or to check your thoughts; or to repress your vanity; or to subdue your temper to sweetness and cheerfulness; or to do your appointed work; or to hold fast to the truth; or to resist inclinations to cowardice; or to lift up your heart to God; or to be sufficiently indifferent to the things of this world; or to be unselfish and kind;—still do your best, with the certain knowledge that Christ is accepting and blessing and aiding all that you do, not watching to find fault, but to see how best you can be helped; and that past failures are but a reason for more vigorous efforts; since, while your face is turned towards Him, final failure is impossible.

November 5, 1865.

SERMON XIII.

THE SINFULNESS OF SIN.

ROMANS viii. 23.

'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.'

ONE of the marked characteristics of the Bible, distinguishing it from every other series of writings in the world, except those which have drawn their spirit from itself, is the keen sense expressed in it throughout of the sinfulness of sin. We find elsewhere a very keen sense of the darkness and perplexity which wrap round all human life; the strange veil which shuts off the soul from what it longs to know, the secrets of the spiritual world; the narrowness of our horizon; the impossibility either of believing that this world is all, or of catching a glimpse of what that other world is like; the certainty of the law of duty, and yet the exceeding difficulty of discerning on what foundation that law ultimately rests. All this we find in heathen philosophy, and with it, as one might expect, longings for more light, for clearer guidance, for a divine teacher, sometimes for a

revelation from heaven. So, too, we find elsewhere great horror of particular deeds, a horror to be accounted for by no reason, and simply to be accepted as a fact: as, for instance, the horror with which the Greeks regarded the shedding of kindred blood, even when shed ignorantly, or it may be innocently; a horror which it is easy enough for us to understand: but not so easy is it to understand why, when this was felt to be so horrible, other evils should have been guarded by no such feeling. So, again, the Roman looked with a mysterious dread, as upon an inexplicable, and perhaps inexpiable sin, the neglect of rites sanctioned by ancient religions. Yet neither Greek nor Roman attached to sin as such, to wrong as such, that sense of an intolerable burden, of an offence to God, of a blasphemy against the true and original nature, which all through the Bible is felt and expressed as if from the very bottom of the soul. No one certainly but a Hebrew could have written the Psalms, which thus reveal to us the depths of our own spirits; no one but a Hebrew could have written the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: others might have passed through a sort of shadow of the same conflict, no other could have so felt and described what the conflict really was; no one but a Hebrew could have spoken, as St. Paul repeatedly does, of joy as one of the fruits of the Spirit, and have conveyed the impression, which he does convey, that the ideal of a Christian life even here on earth contains in it a cheerfulness, a happiness, a sense of perpetual delight peculiarly its own; and yet have said, as he does in the verse that I began

with, 'Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.'

For according to his doctrine we are already sons of God, and yet we are not what we should be, what we long to be. We are still waiting for something. And this that we wait for we are not to have in this life; we shall not attain it till we reach the other. And what is this that we are waiting for? It is 'the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' The soul, the will, if we are Christians, is redeemed already. Already have we given our wills to God. Already we earnestly desire to serve Him, to love Him, to belong to Him. But our body is not yet redeemed, and therefore we groan. So, too, St. Paul expresses the same thought elsewhere in different words; he speaks of Christians as looking for 'the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.' So, again, St. John plainly means the same thing when he says, 'Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.' Even in the redeemed there still remains something to be wholly changed, something that Christ will have to subdue when He comes, something that makes them groan within themselves. So, again, when our Lord promises a blessing on those that mourn, namely that they shall be comforted, when He invites those to come to Him that labour and are

heavy laden, we do not suppose that He means to exclude all the common sorrows of life, the vexations, the cares, the anxieties, the weariness, the disappointments, the perplexities that will occasionally beset every man that lives; but no reader of the Gospel fails instinctively to refer these promises and invitations chiefly to those who are suffering from one special burden—the burden of evil in themselves which they know not how to get rid of.

The distinction between religion and morality is, that one refers ultimately to a person, the other ultimately to a law: the aim of one is to please a God, the aim of the other is to fulfil a duty; the test of one is whether the life is acceptable to a Divine Judge, the test of the other is whether it squares with an eternal rule. To be acquitted by conscience, to have no transgression recorded against you in your own memory, to have done all that could be demanded of you, to be unblameable, is the perfection of morality: to be accepted, to be acknowledged, to feel that God approves your service, holds you as His own, takes you to Himself, that is the end of religion.

But so much of religion as this was to be found elsewhere than in the Bible, and is to be found elsewhere still. One of the marks which especially separate the true religion from all others is that sense of God's presence in the conscience which makes all wrong, whatever it may be, a sin against Him; which makes all moral evil, whatever it may be, not merely mischievous, not merely wrong, but a barrier between the

soul and God, a transgression of the Divine ordinances, an insult to the Divine Presence. You might call a heathen religious if he showed a deep sense of God's supremacy over all things; if he looked up to God as the supreme law-giver; if he expected to find in God the final judge; if he lived with the thought of God present to his mind, and showed the influence of that thought in what he did and said. But religion has not had its full work on the Christian soul if all this be not attended with a deep sense also of the sinfulness of sin.

He has not yet drunk in the spirit of the Bible who shakes off all sense of his own faults as much as he can, and thinks lightly of the evil inherent in them; who when he has done wrong has no deep sense of the need of repentance, but contents himself with the superficial amendment of resolving not to do it again; who lets one wrong act follow another of the same kind and is very desirous to stop the series from going any further, but has no sense of the mischief of having the fountain and source of this evil within him; who is very desirous to check wrong deeds, but cares not to lift his soul above wrong inclinations; who will watch the life, but not the impulses; the words, not the thoughts; the conduct, not the character. I do not say that such an one is not a Christian at all; for grace is a thing that grows, and the imperfect is only to be condemned when it imagines itself perfect and stands still where it is. But this character is imperfect; so imperfect that it can hardly be considered to be yet

awake; for it seems, as it were, to have yet to learn the leading thought of the Revelation of God.

To feel the sinfulness of sin in all its fulness is the privilege of the innocent that have not fallen, or of the veteran Christian who has in some sort recovered his innocence by the help of God. A sin that has never yet stained the conscience, an evil that by God's grace has been hitherto quite kept at bay, a sin of which the soul is conscious that never yet has it touched the life, always seems, to those who are tempted to it for the first time, after they have learnt what it is, peculiarly evil. We slip into sin sometimes without quite knowing what we are doing; and in such cases even the innocent is sometimes without warning of the step that he is taking. But if by any happy Providence we have been kept innocent of any evil, and yet have learnt to understand it, it always seems surrounded by a mystery of evil which never attends sins that we have committed before. This is one of the peculiar blessings of innocence, which, if any man still possesses, let him die ten thousand times rather than exchange for anything else on earth.

But something of the same sort, in some respects even more powerful, more keen, more penetrating, though never so pure and heavenly, returns at last to every man who buckles on his armour and fights his appointed battle. He learns, and very soon learns, to look on the sin in his own nature with the very feeling which St. Paul describes, with the very passion which breaks out in so many of the Psalms. He learns very soon to look back on sins that he has forsaken with a deeper shame the more entirely

he has forsaken them. He learns to value whatever innocence he still retains as a more precious treasure as he perceives how little it is and how hard to keep. He learns to lay hold with a deeper grasp of his whole nature on whatever can help him away from himself. The nearer he comes to the adoption, the more he groans within himself in the earnest endeavour to reach it.

But how is all this to be consistent with that joy which is assuredly one of the fruits of the Spirit? How shall the Christian, if he carry within this perpetual sense of the burden of evil, be cheerful and joyous? how shall he inspire cheerfulness in others? how shall he lighten the burdens that others have to bear, as we are told that a Christian ought to do?

Let it be granted that the thoughtless, careless Christian who has never so grossly fallen as to stain his good name, whose faults are shallow just because his character is shallow, who has not yet learnt half the lesson of Christian life, who tosses his faults aside without giving them a second thought, and whose faults are not yet of a sort to ruin his soul, who is easy and happy and light-hearted, let it be granted that very often he seems the more cheerful, the more delightful, the pleasanter companion even for Christians. But the true Christian's joy is something deeper than all this, and in the day of real difficulty will still be bright when all this is overclouded. The joy of the Christian is not mere high spirits, but a deepening sense of the overshadowing love of God and of the power of that love. As in the conflict the

Christian is sure to feel more and more keenly the sinfulness of sin, so is he sure to feel more and more deeply what a rest it is to be upheld by God's hands, what a support it is to trust in God's care, what a purification it is to confess sins to God, what an inspiration it is to have God in the thoughts, what a power it is to feel that he is God's child. You cannot have this all at once. But grace grows. If sin and the sense of sin abounds, grace much more abounds. The two indeed grow together. The man who has the keenest sense of the evil of evil will be sure to have the keenest sense of the joy of love. The man who is most grieved with the burden of his own sins will have the deepest happiness in the reconciliation wrought for him by the Cross of Christ. The man who exclaims, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' is the man who can add with most heartfelt gratitude, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

November 12, 1865.

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SERMON XIV.

CENTRAL TRUTHS OUR SUPPORT IN GRIEF.

ROMANS xiii. 12.

'*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*'

THE great festivals of the Church speak to the Christian with a double power. For they stir the soul with memories which can never fail of their effect; which seem to thrill us with ever new emotion the more we recall them; which seem year after year to gain light and force and value; which speak with clearer tones, and are met by distincter answers from within. But besides this, these festivals ever take us back once more to those broad fundamental truths which are never touched by controversy or assailed by doubt, which every day makes us more sure of, which increasing years only cut more deeply into the very substance of our souls. There is much power in the teaching that we get from all parts of the Bible. While we are studying any part of the Revelation of God, heavenly thoughts are suggested, and new light is given to much of life, and new ideas,

fruitful in after years, flash across the mind. Often when we are reading God's Word, or when we hear it explained or commented on, we learn new lessons of great value; we see new light for guidance; we understand what perplexed us; we rise as it were to a higher level; we aim at higher objects; we recognise what is more excellent. And yet meanwhile we are often conscious that even when we have got the truth in these studies of ours, we have it emphatically in earthen vessels. The truth is there, but the words in which we have clothed it for ourselves, or in which others have clothed it for us, are inadequate somehow, do not fully convey it, do not quite satisfy our conscience. We are conscious that if the truth expressed be divine, yet the words which express it are human. Perhaps we cannot express it better, and yet we do not feel as if all was said that should be said. And this feeling is strengthened by seeing how men differ on these matters, good men too, religious men, men about whose devotion to Christ there can be no doubt whatever. One puts the truth in one way and one in another. And sometimes they differ so much that neither can see any truth at all in that which the other holds to be truth absolute. And unquestionably there is a tendency, as time goes on, to feel doubts of what you believe and other good men do not believe. You may be quite sure that what you hold contains the truth, but it is harder to be sure that what you hold is the truth. Shall we abandon the study of such matters? No, by no means. We may not ever be able even to the last accurately to express in human

forms the divine truth that religious study shall reveal to us. But it is something even to approach this; it is something to catch glimpses of truth here and there; to gaze on divine things and see their outlines as it were through the rifts in the clouds; to draw heavenly water even in these poor, leaky, ill-shaped earthen vessels. Such studies, such thoughts, do undeniably help us to come nearer to God, do purify the intellect, do enlighten the conscience, do ennoble the feelings, do sanctify the imagination. In reading the Bible, in trying to understand it, in applying it to our lives, even if we fail of all else we do get a great help towards imbibing its spirit; and if we could but do that, what price would we not pay for such a gain? But gain though this be, yet assuredly there is a sense of deep peace given to us by these great festivals, which bring us back to the undoubted truths from which all spiritual life draws its life-blood for ever. When we come back to the thoughts of the inexhaustible love of God, of the tenderness and sympathy of Christ, of the eternal supremacy of right, of the precious excellence of purity, of the immortal life that must belong to spiritual beings, of the absolute justice of the judgment in the other world; when we leave all difficult studies, all subjects of controversy, all that is revealed only by glimpses as it were and snatches, and are called back to these first principles on which the very babes in Christ may feed, we feel that our feet are planted on the unassailable rock; from which it is inconceivable that the conscience should ever be stirred. These truths never suffer by time or study or thought. We need not, as longer

experience opens our eyes to what is within us and around us, to our own nature and to the nature of other men, we need not here to modify, to correct, to doubt. We do not find here that we have to give up our opinion for want of evidence, and to change the form of another, and to leave another as it were in suspense, unable to tell whether it be true or not. Here every day only makes us feel still more the contrast, that while many other important doctrines are hard to express, and hard to separate from mixture of falsehood, these only seem more sure, more impossible to be touched. Many opinions, many beliefs are tossed about as it were on the waves of life, and what the young man is sure of, the older man hesitates about, and is unwilling to pronounce. But these truths, like rocks in the sea, only feel the firmer the longer you stand on them and the more you contrast them with the tossing and the wavering of everything else.

Advent Sunday is come to tell us that this life is in itself a sleep, and that the Christian is bound to wake himself out of it. It is a sleep, a dream. Just as in dreams the ordinary laws of material nature seem suspended and yet cause us no surprise, so too in this life we feel no surprise, no sense of strangeness, though we constantly see the laws of moral truth and moral consequences suspended or apparently set aside. In a dream it is no surprise if you are one moment here at Rugby, the next at your own home, the next somewhere in another land. It is no surprise if you are walking with a friend, and of a sudden you are with

some one else; or if your friend turn into a wild beast and attempt to destroy you. No impossibility surprises you, no absurd want of sequence, no purposeless miracle. You are in a land where all the ordinary laws of this world are put aside. So, too, is this world itself the canopy of a dream. It is no surprise now if a wicked act goes unpunished, or a lie be quite successful, or selfishness bring a man real enjoyment. It is not surprising if a plausible man gets the better of a true man, or a self-seeking man be liked better than a self-denying man. Nothing very wrong and yet very successful is now surprising. We are shocked at it; we are indignant at it; we protest against it. But it causes no such sense of surprise as if we were to see in actual life some of the impossible things that we dream. But it will not always be so. One day we shall be broad awake, and that wrong should prevail over right, or that evil-doing should not be punished, or that in the slightest tittle God's moral law should fail, will seem as strange, as impossible, as absurd, as it would seem now for one man to be transported in a second to the antipodes, or for another to pull down the moon from the sky. One day we shall be broad awake, and the sure certainty of the laws of the conscience shall hold us as fast as we are now held by the laws of matter. It would seem a miracle now if a man were to leap from a tree and not come to the ground, if he were to put his hand in the fire and not be burnt, if he were to call to the stars and bring them down by his voice. It will be a miracle then if a man shall tell a lie and not be punished, if

he shall do the right and not be the better and the brighter and the nearer to God.

This life is a sleep. The child sleeping in the cradle is unconscious of the mother that bends over him with love in her face, with tenderness in every gesture, that takes so much pains that comfort, and health, and pleasure shall be with him even in his sleep. And so, too, we are covered over with the curtains of a slumber which shuts out from our eyes the love, the care, the calm but thoughtful watchfulness that are ever all around us. We love those whom we know, and whose love is poured out upon us with never-failing fulness. We love those to whom we owe so much, and that not only because we owe so much, but because their love goes to our hearts. But we are not permitted to see One who loves us more than all others, whose face, assuredly when we see it, will look as if it loved us; will call more tenderly, will welcome more lovingly, than any face we have ever seen. And yet He is always close at hand, and when we awake up on the other side of the grave our eyes shall meet His.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand; Christians are called to awake. Yet a little while, indeed, we are to walk on here as it were in the dark, knowing these truths but not seeing them. Yet a little while we shall still be half wrapped up in dreams, surrounded by strange impossibilities, and half tempted to fancy that right and wrong are not as real as night and day, and that the heavenly voice that speaks within is a strange delusion. Yet a little while we shall not be allowed to

see the loving hand that is guarding our lives, and we shall fear death as if it were the gate of some unknown and fearful land, and not the entrance to the presence of undying love. But Advent Sunday bids us nevertheless awake. Awake to see those everlasting laws which God hath carved, not on tables of stone, but on the whole created universe, nay, on the very substance of His own unchangeable nature. Awake to stand upon the rock that cannot be shaken, neither in this world nor in all others that are or shall be. Awake to live as those should live who know that God is love. Ah, what pain it will be, if you have but a touch of feeling in your heart, to stand before Christ and to see in His face how deeply, how warmly He loved you, and how carelessly you wounded that love; to feel that He gave you His very heart, and that you only gave Him back in return that bitterest of all pains, the pain of seeing those whom you love do wrong.

December 3, 1865. (Advent Sunday.)

SERMON XV.

THE USE OF KNOWLEDGE.

JAMES iv. 17.

'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

THERE are not a few things in this world to which a choice of consequences is attached, and these in some degree incompatible with each other in fact, and always utterly incompatible in spirit. Thus, for instance, it is said that the meek shall inherit the earth. In other words, the consequence of unselfishness is almost invariably earthly power in much greater proportion than would otherwise fall to the lot of the man to whom it is thus given. A man known by his friends to be utterly unselfish is sure to be trusted, to be consulted, to have offices thrust upon him, to be made judge and referee, to be followed as a leader quite out of proportion to his mere abilities. Of course men do think much of ability and clearness of vision in choosing whom they shall consult and follow; but in the long run they think still more of the entire trustworthiness of the single-

minded character. Now when we are told that the meek shall inherit the earth, we may think of this inheritance as an enjoyment to the man who thus obtains it; or may think of the pleasure to the man's self of thus having power and influence and trust; we may think of it as an earthly reward. But it is obvious that the unselfish man cannot think of it so, or he loses the very unselfishness which won it all. He must by the nature of the case, unless he sinks to a lower level, find it no pleasure of this sort, no mere place of repose, no such enjoyment as a rich man finds in his riches, no freedom from anxiety; on the contrary, it is not unlikely that this very blessing may be to him an added burden, fresh anxiety, fresh responsibility, from which in his weaker moments he would fain escape. It is a blessing; but the blessing is found in the greater opportunity for being unselfish, in the deeper sense of surrendering his will to God's will, in the lifting of his unselfishness as it were to a higher and more heavenly standard.

So, again, the reward of humility is to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The humble man, the man who thinks least of himself, the man who comes not to be ministered unto but to minister, the man who is willing to be the servant of all, he is to be entrusted with the chief office among the people of the Lord. The reward of heavenly ambition, of earnest devotion, is to be that which was promised to the two sons of Zebedee; not, namely, to sit on the right hand and on the left of the Son of Man in His glory, but to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism. Here in this world it

may seem quite otherwise. The honours, the dignities of this world are given by quite other rules. And if any man begin with the very highest aims and find, as does sometimes happen, that without his seeking it earthly rewards are bestowed on him, still these rewards do him positive harm, if he forget the condition of all spiritual advancement, namely, self-abandonment. He has his choice. He may still retain his singleness of aim, his longing desire to lose sight of himself, his ambition to serve, and serve without reward; and if he does, he will find that his reward is only a fresh demand upon him, new calls, more difficult duties, more anxious responsibilities; and perhaps he will wish at times that the call on him might cease. Or else—and here is the danger—he may find a delight in the earthly side of what he has won, may find a pleasure in his own will, may get a relish for power, may like to stand out and be seen. And in proportion as he does this, he sinks from the heavenly to the earthly kind; and what perhaps came to him because of former nobleness, he keeps in a meaner spirit, and degrades it to an earthly use.

God has so constructed the world, that to serve Him always brings with it some sort of earthly reward: sometimes power, sometimes trust, sometimes influence, sometimes fame. But this earthly reward is to the true servant of God a stepping-stone to a higher self-denial, or else it is a snare. To those who do not yet know God's supreme will, the desire for such things is a harmless motive; not the highest, and yet not in itself blameworthy. But no one can rest there without danger to his

nobler nature. In the act of serving God we learn to know Him better, and with the knowledge comes a new call, and with the new call a new responsibility, and at every step there is the choice either to sink below what you were, or to make a still fuller renunciation than before.

So is it with knowledge. Knowledge has its earthly rewards. There is a pleasure in the mere possession of knowledge; there is a pleasure in the fame and the power which necessarily belong to it. He that knows stands higher than he who does not know, all the world over. Nor is there anything blameworthy in finding this pleasure in knowledge. But if you rest in that pleasure, if your knowledge and your culture has done nothing for you but give you this, then there is harm, and very grievous harm. If you cannot use your better knowledge to make you in some sense more heavenly than you were, if your nobler parts are no stronger, and your higher nature has no greater control over your life, then you are choosing wrong, and are sacrificing the true end of knowledge to that which is but the worldly end.

What ought greater knowledge and better education to do for a man?

First, it ought to make him much less selfish. For, unquestionably, education helps a man to understand others, to enter into their thoughts, to put himself into their position, to clothe himself as it were with their surroundings, to sympathise with their feelings. It is not to be wondered at if a man with no education at all should find it hard to understand the motives, the reasons, the

emotions of other men. But all education unquestionably makes this easier. And, if so, the inference is irresistible, that it is much easier for the educated man to be unselfish, to see the reasonableness of other people's wishes, to feel the force of other people's motives. To give way, and to give way gracefully and happily, to be considerate, to anticipate what others will feel, to shrink from what will give pain, this is no more than we ought to gain at once from our gain in culture of mind. Yet educated people are very often very selfish. Why? Because they do not use their knowledge in that way at all. They could, if they chose it, very readily perceive what is pleasant to others and what is painful. But they will not try. And so they very often give needless annoyance, and hurt the feelings and disregard the wishes of others, and are perhaps unconscious of it all the while, because it never occurs to them to think about others at all.

Yet, again, greater knowledge ought to bring with it a peculiar charity. It is often said that charity is not a virtue of the heart only, but of the head also: those only are truly charitable who are quick at entering into the minds of others. And this is in a certain sense true. And so it is an excellence to which all culture ought to lead: all culture ought to lead to caution in judging, and to toleration of differences, and to largeness of mind; it ought to make us ready to believe the best of every man, ready to acknowledge that other ways of thinking and other ways of living besides our own may be as good as ours. This is not always the result. And why? For

the same reason, because the knowledge has not been used for its own highest purposes.

Yet, again, knowledge ought to bring with it a humility of its own. It is not the same humility as that which belongs to ignorance, but it is something deeper. For all knowledge ought to deepen the sense of the vastness of God's creation, of the infinity of God Himself, of the nothingness and yet the greatness of human life, of the largeness and yet the smallness of human understanding. For any one who knows anything, to be conceited of his own knowledge is in reality the most ludicrous of all sights; for every step in knowledge ought to have shown him his own ignorance with far greater clearness than it showed him anything else.

Yet one more growth in knowledge is indeed worth nothing at all, if it does not elevate and purify the tastes and aims. If your culture leaves you where it found you, caring for nothing nobler, fixed upon nothing more heavenly; if it has not helped you to trample down all the lower pleasures; if it has not helped you to keep under the body and bring it into subjection; if it has not lifted you farther away from the irrational beasts of the field; if bodily pleasures, whether the gratification of appetites, or the enjoyment of bodily strength and skill, be the supreme purpose of your life; if your conscience be clearer but not more powerful; if you have seen the vision of a purer life and have not learnt to strive for it; if the faculties of your higher nature have been roused from slumber and have not got their rightful place, what can be said of all your knowledge but that it is a deadly

snare? To rise into clearer light and yet to prefer the darkness, to know more of the very truth and yet to turn away the eyes, to be instructed in the doctrines of God and yet go back to the folly of self-seeking—this, surely, may well be called by St. James a sin.

Let us look well, now that our thoughts are called to the coming judgment of Christ, let us look well to see what effect our own daily culture of mind is having on our lives; let us look well whether the year that has passed since last Advent season, as it has assuredly added to our experience, our mental growth, our light, so has added to the unselfishness, the humility, the charity, the heavenly purpose in our minds. The earthly results of education are pretty sure to come in proportion to the education itself. In whatever degree we study, and give our thoughts and our time to our studies, we are tolerably certain to get all that this world promises to those who have cultivated their intellects. But the heavenly we can take or we can leave as we will. We are Christians. We are responsible to our Master Christ. If our education does not make us still better Christians year by year, then it is self-condemned; and we ourselves shall one day feel with the bitterest shame that nothing is so worthless as a knowledge which does not ennoble.

December 10, 1865.

SERMON XVI.

THE BATHED MUST YET BE CLEANSED.

ST. JOHN xiii. 10.

'Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.'

OUR Lord, when He washed His disciples' feet, let them plainly understand that there was a hidden meaning in what He was doing. For when St. Peter, out of reverence, shrank from allowing his Master thus to humble Himself to him, our Lord said to Him, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' And when St. Peter still shrank, our Lord went on to tell him that this washing was the condition of belonging to Himself. Then St. Peter's reverence was conquered by his love, and he said, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' But our Lord replied, 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' It is a pity that our translation has here somewhat obscured the meaning by using the same

English word to translate two different Greek words. It should be, as every one who has looked at the Greek is aware, not 'he that is washed,' but 'he that is bathed.' He that has just come from the bath does not need to be immediately bathed again; all that he needs is to wash his feet, that have been soiled in coming away. Christ's love is a bath, in which we are bathed. This bath cleanses the soul. If we have really been thus washed, if we have really given Him our hearts, if we have taken Him for our Master, then we are clean. But not even this bath can preserve our mortal weakness from the evil of our besetting infirmity. Even he that has plunged into the love of Christ and Christ's law, yet will soil his feet as he walks through the world, and will need perpetually to be washed as the disciples were washed on the evening of the Last Supper. Forgetfulness, thoughtlessness, the impulses of the fleshly nature, the flashes of human temper, the temptations which take us at disadvantage by assailing us unawares, the evil instincts formed in our souls by past evil habits,—these things will soil the Christian's feet, even when he comes straight from the very bath in which he has washed away the pollution of sin, and he will need that his Saviour once more cleanse him before he is fit for communion with God. It is terribly disappointing to find out how sinful we are, and how even the cleansing which seems to wash us in times of fervour and earnest self-devotion, nay, which does not only seem, but really does wash us, and, as it were, make us new creatures, yet so soon gives place to stains and defilements. But our Lord foresaw it all. And at the

very last He provided this comfort for this very disappointment. He declared that even this, the defilement of the feet in the pathways of the world, He would wash, and not merely cleanse once for all, but ever renew the cleansing as it was needed.

Let me say something of the kind of sin which needs this cleansing, and to which this cleansing is especially promised. Sins, as we know, differ very much in blackness, according to the light given to our understanding; according to the strength given to our will; according to the suddenness, the subtlety, the violence, the continuance of the temptations; according to the consequences which they produce, and our knowledge of those consequences. But there is yet another distinction which depends not on anything in the act of sinning, but on the way in which we conduct ourselves after we have sinned. Let a sin be great or little; let it indicate very serious want of principle, or a moment's forgetfulness; let it deserve heavy punishment or merely a passing rebuke; still, over and above all these differences, there is yet one other difference which we can make in it by the way in which we treat it. And it is upon this more than upon anything else that the effect of the sin upon our souls depends. For the very worst sin loses its evil power over ourselves almost indefinitely, if it be quickly shaken off. And a very slight fault, if we allow it to sink into us and penetrate the character, may be a deadly fault. The power of sin over the soul depends, to a very great degree, on the time that it is allowed to hold its place. You lose your temper: perhaps you say

what is very wrong, perhaps you do injustice, perhaps you let your temper altogether carry you away. But when you are cool, what will you do? Set right the wrong to the best of your power; or brood over the matter, whatever it was that provoked you, till you embitter yourself; or, while feeling that you are in the wrong, harden your heart against saying so, because it would hurt your own pride? You say what is not quite true in the heat of talking. You recollect it afterwards. What will you do? Will you humble yourself by confessing; or will you be too proud to do that, and let it alone? You have been thoughtless and neglected your work. You remember it presently. What will you do? Set about it to the best of your power; or think it too late to be of any use, and give up all attempt at it? You have allowed your mind to slip away from your devotion to your Lord. Your prayers have unawares become mechanical, your devotions altogether cold, the thought of Christ has become unfamiliar. But presently something awakes you, and you see that all is not right. What will you do? go back at once to Christ and ask to be forgiven and taken back to His love; or remain as if spell-bound, unhappy, discontented, with a sense of sin on the conscience, with a sense of a barrier between yourself and God, waiting for you know not what, perhaps straying every moment farther away?

It is the sin which remains on the conscience that withers and destroys all religious life. It is the sin which, whether great or small in itself, we will not repent of; it is the sin which we are too proud to set right, that

really keeps us from our Saviour. To be defeated in the spiritual warfare is a serious matter; but to keep away from the voice of the Captain, to be unwilling to fight any more, to be too much ashamed or too proud to come back and submit to His will, this is worse than all defeats. But meanwhile our Lord knows full well that we shall be often taken in all manner of faults, and He is ready to cleanse us the moment we come back to Him. If we have been separated from Him for ever so little, His heart goes out to meet us the moment we begin to return. As the father met the prodigal son, so our Lord sees us and welcomes us when we are yet a great way off. And we know it. We know it even in ourselves. There is no man who does not feel a secret and instantaneous sympathy with ready repentance. Even a man who is too proud to repent readily himself, yet in his secret soul bows down to the childlike simplicity which no sooner is aware of a fault than it hastens to confess, to make amends where amends is possible, to seek forgiveness. We know from the testimony of our own instinctive admiration that this is heavenly, this is what God loves, this is what Christ died to win, the heart that may go astray but cannot remain away, the heart that may sin, but cannot bear to live in sin. And this voice of our own instincts is right, and the Bible repeats the same lesson in every way, and in every way invites the child of God to come back to his Father sure of acceptance, sure of welcome, sure of cleansing, sure of future help.

Try, brethren, all that you can, to cherish in your

souls this perpetual readiness to repent, even of little faults, and much more of great faults. Try to shake off whatever it may be, shame, or pride, or unwillingness, which makes you, when you have done wrong, still linger under the burden of the wrong. Try to come at once to that washing of the feet which is one of the very last, and surely one of the very best, of all the offers of our Saviour to us His disciples. But above all should those learn to do this who have sealed their devotion and obtained a pledge of their acceptance this morning in the Lord's Supper. Coming to the Lord's Supper is to many of us a bath. It is, and it ought to be to all of us, something more than an ordinary cleansing. We have a right to feel more certain of God's love and of His aid. We have a right to feel more sure than before that past sins shall not rise up against us, or that, if they do, we shall be able to deal with them rightly. We have a right to feel more sure that we belong to our Lord, and that our Lord belongs to us; that He is our leader, our captain, our king; that we are His soldiers, His subjects. But as we walk on through the world and soil our feet, as we inevitably shall, we can hardly estimate how much depends on our instantly going to Him and letting Him cleanse us once more. It is the readiness of repentance that marks the childlike character. Little children are easily led away, but they are easily made sorry, and easily are they brought to seek forgiveness from offended parents. And this is one of the ways in which Christians are to resemble little children. It is

readiness of repentance which marks the loving temper. The self-contained, cold character feels no ready need of forgiveness. If such an one has done wrong, he always wishes to set it right first, and seek for forgiveness afterwards, perhaps not to seek forgiveness at all. Such an one cannot bear to accept forgiveness, but always desires to earn it. But the loving character knows that nothing earns forgiveness so surely, so truly, as seeking for it, and all other earning should follow, not precede. It is this readiness of repentance which above everything else marks the pure character. Purity of heart in such weak creatures as we are may sometimes be stained for a moment by various faults, but nothing is so abhorrent to the truly pure in heart as to *remain* in the sin. Haste, eager haste, to cleanse defilement off is the surest token of a soul that has begun to feel the beauty of heavenly purity. It is this readiness of repentance which keeps alive the flame of the love of Christ, until it burn with a steady glow, more and more brightly to the very grave, and brighter still beyond it. Our love seems so cold, so poor, so weak, as hardly to deserve the name. We are almost ashamed to speak of our own loyalty to our King, because it falls so short. We almost feel sometimes as if a religious life which had so little passion in it as ours has must be shallow and insincere. And we ask what charm, what magic shall kindle in us the true fire. But even the smoking flax will burst into a flame at last, if we will but see that our own tardiness in coming to Christ do not put it out. If you have done wrong,

nay, I will say rather, whenever you have done wrong, for such wrong-doing is quite sure to come, know that this wrong-doing will not quench the smoking flax, but delay in coming to Christ will. Know this, and know, too, that instant repentance brings you instant forgiveness; nay, more than forgiveness, love and approval and help from the Lord of all power and might.

January 28, 1866.

SERMON XVII.

FALLING AND RISING.

GENESIS iii. 22.

'*And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.*'

THESE words contain the expression of one of the strangest parts of that great mystery, *the* mystery of human nature, namely, original sin. Original sin is altogether a mystery, and every part of the doctrine so named, and every inference from it, is mysterious. Such is the difficulty of this mystery, that all the earlier heresies of the Eastern Church, beginning with the Gnostics and ending with the Manichæans, may be traced to speculations on this matter and attempts to explain what is really inexplicable. And when the Eastern Church had done with the subject the Western Church took it up, and all the heresies which begin with Pelagianism are due to this also. We shall not go back to those speculations. A time comes at last when men learn that a problem is insoluble, and then they cease to attempt to solve it. And so a sort of instinct keeps the Church now from all attempt to account for the origin of evil. From the fact

we cannot escape; but how to account for the fact we know not, and it is tolerably certain that we never shall know.

But though it is quite useless to speculate on the causes of this mystery, it is not useless to study what the mystery is, and what are its consequences. And one special part of the mystery I shall now speak about.

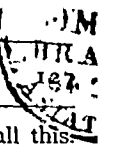
In the words that I have read from the third chapter of Genesis, it is plainly implied that what we call the Fall of man, was in one sense not a fall but a rise. For it is said that man had become 'one of us'; that is, one of the diviner natures. He had fallen; but yet he had risen also into a higher sphere. If his moral nature had become degraded, his intellectual nature had become enlarged. And this falls in precisely with our own common notions. For while we think of brutes as below mankind, yet we think of devils and evil spirits as in some sort of way above mankind; wickeder and yet higher.

In precise accordance with this, when we look at the history a little later, we find two races described: one of these is descended from Cain, the murderer; the other from Seth, in whose time men began to call upon the name of the Lord. Cain's race is traced to Lamech, who seems set forth as the very type of impiety, boasting that if God could avenge Cain sevenfold, Lamech would avenge himself seventy and sevenfold. In Seth's race we find Enoch who walked with God, and was not, because God took him, and afterwards Noah the chosen preacher of righteousness. We cannot doubt therefore that in some sense the two races are contrasted. But it is to the evil

race, not to the good, that the discovery of arts and employments is ascribed. It is among the race of Cain that we find the inventor of tents and of cattle-feeding; the inventor of musical instruments; the discoverer of iron and its uses. The arts by which man rises in the scale of civilization seem to belong to the evil rather than to the good.

Long after, when the Israelites demand a king, they are treated as having done wrong. They are told that it is a rejection of God; they are warned that it is the beginning of suffering. Yet, for all that, the glory of the nation follows on this wrong act, and no one can hesitate in ranking the days of David and Solomon above the days of Gideon and Jephtha; nay, the prophets themselves always look back on the monarchy and not on the republic as the type of the true glory that was to follow.

Precisely the same idea, but stated in a different form, do we find in the teaching of St. Paul. He speaks of himself as alive without the Law once; but the commandment came, sin sprang into life, and he died. He had once been innocent, because he was not as yet conscious of God's will; but when he did reach the knowledge of God's will, he forthwith fell, for the holiness of God's Law was too much for his weak nature to reach. Sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived him, and by it slew him. In the Book of Genesis, man is represented as falling into sin and yet attaining a higher knowledge. In St. Paul, man is represented as attaining a higher knowledge and forthwith falling into sin. The same two things are in the two cases irrevocably bound together.



And our own experience of life will agree with all this. Knowledge of God's Law is often the beginning of sin; and sin is often the beginning of the knowledge of God's Law. We constantly see cases in which it is very difficult to deny that a man seems to have positively grown in consequence of having done wrong. He seems somehow to have got clearer purposes and greater strength. He seems to know his own mind better and to be more resolute in following it. He has fallen; but he seems not the worse but positively the better for having fallen. He fell perhaps when he was half awake; but the fall awoke him, and he learnt out of his fall what nothing else, as it seems, could have taught him. He fell perhaps out of wilfulness; but had he not fallen he would still be liable to fall, whereas now he will be ever after on his guard. Or perhaps still more often you see that a man, though he is not better, though he is distinctly worse, yet he knows more; he has gained insight; he has gained power over others. He has fallen, but he has also risen; risen perhaps to his own greater and more fearful harm.

That there must be another way of rising we know for certain, for it would be utterly contrary to the voice of our own consciences to deny it. Nay, not only so, but our own experience will prove it.

For what is this rise? It is in its perfection the rise from innocence to holiness. Innocence is the excellence of the child who does not know good from evil, who does what is good from purity of nature, and cannot do evil because he does not yet know that evil is evil. Holiness is the excellence of the matured saint, who does good

from principle in spite of distinct temptation, with full knowledge of what he is doing. Now there can be no doubt that many a man has grown out of innocence to holiness, if not in all respects yet in some one or more. There are men who from a sort of excellence of nature have always been pure, or have always been true, or have always been just, or have always been generous. And these men who began thus with mere innocence in these qualities have had this natural excellence so hardened and strengthened and enlightened by the experience of life, that the lower grace has unconsciously developed into the higher, and what was once the fruit of unconscious goodness, of a sort of beauty of nature, has become a conscious part of the will; the child has remained a child in spirit, but has become a man in understanding. This is the right kind of growth. And even to mention it makes one long for it. What must it be never to have sullied the soul? How heavenly! How, beyond all words, beyond all estimate, lovely! To remember temptations; to remember struggles; but never to remember one single stain on the will or life!

This is the excellent kind of growth. But we know that this is rare, and in it there is no mystery at all. What is mysterious is that there should be another mode of growth; that in so many cases the passage from innocence to holiness should have been through sin; that men should seem, and many do often seem, as if they had been the really better for sinning. Nay, not only so; but every now and then you see what seems stranger still; that a man seems positively the worse for always trying

to do right; that it is possible to be over-scrupulous, to be morbidly conscientious; that there is such a thing as an excess of desire to keep the narrow path. This seems strange indeed. And yet many of the Pharisees were unquestionably men of this sort,—men who damaged themselves and damaged their own spiritual life by over-attention to their own conduct. And, without going the length of the Pharisees, it is still possible to cultivate right in a wrong way; to make yourself narrow out of a desire to keep yourself from faults; to shut yourself up within unreasonable scruples; to waste your spiritual strength on trifles, and leave none for serious battles.

I began by saying that all this is a mystery; and it will remain a mystery. But it has, like all other religious mysteries, a practical, though not an intellectual solution. Why it is that doing wrong should sometimes be made by God the revealer to us of His divine secrets, why it is that we should grow sometimes quite as truly by doing wrong as by doing right; or, to put it in other words, why it is that God should sometimes choose out of our own sins to extract for our use our best lessons, none can tell. But we can tell what light it is that this mystery sheds on our own life; for we see hence plainly this: that it is not by perpetually correcting of faults that men grow. As was once said to me by an intimate friend, Arthur Clough, with whom many years ago I used to be ever discussing such questions, men who grow in that way grow like the poplar; always upward it may be, but soft and poor in character. The true growth is that of the oak; jagged, and rough, and knotted, but with strength and solidity

within. How, then, shall man grow if not by correcting faults? By self-surrender to God. Not by thinking of wrong and how to flee it; but much rather of excellence, and how to win it. Not so much by fear of sin, but rather by love of Christ. Not by caution against wrong doing, but rather by enthusiasm in right doing. Go out of yourself and think of others; go out of your own life and plunge into the service of your Lord. Self-discipline is good, very good. You will find plenty of use for it; but it is quite secondary. It is of no value unless there be behind it the longing desire to be what discipline cannot make you, that is, not faultless, but noble. Then will you find that your Master can extract a blessing even from your faults, and make your very falls a means to bring you nearer to Himself.

February 4, 1866.

SERMON XVIII.

USE OF OBSERVANCES.

ST. MATTHEW ix. 15.

'*Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*'

IT seems at first sight as if a spiritual religion would dispense with observances altogether. And there is a sense in which this is the case always, and there are occasions on which all observances are dispensed with altogether. For it is undeniable that observances must be secondary, and if they are elevated into the first rank they are out of place. So St. Paul tells the Galatians that he is afraid of them, because they observe days and months, and times and years. So he tells the Colossians not to let any man judge them in respect of meat or of drink, or of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days. And the whole tenor of his teaching corresponds, and perpetually reminds us of his own saying, 'Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?' In his day and in his circumstances there

was plainly something which made him throw his chief weight into the scale against all observances. Not that he neglected them in his own person, for that he certainly did not; but that he found the stream so strong in their support that he was compelled to oppose it.

Our Lord, however, in answering the question of the Pharisee, why His disciples did not fast, gives us the precise measure of all such observances. If we had the bridegroom always with us, we should never need them. But the bridegroom leaves us sometimes, and then we cannot do without them.

He has left us for our good, because, as He Himself declared, if He did not go away the Comforter could not come to us. If we always had Him in the flesh we should never learn to find Him in the spirit. If He had remained always bodily present with His Church, Christians could never have been trained in true trustworthiness, which is only tested in absence; they never could have learnt the power of prayer, which only shows its strength to support us when all other support is taken away; they never could have been disciplined in faith, for while He was present to the eye the great trial of faith would have been wanting. He would have us children in malice, but men in understanding. But how could Christians have grown to thoughtful manhood when there was such a guide and ruler always close at hand to spare them the labour of thought? He would have us know ourselves, know our own weakness, know the mystery of our own nature. But if He had remained always with us, though, no doubt, Christians would have done wrong

even in His very presence, as His Apostles did more than once, yet they could not have learnt to the full their own helplessness, their need of redemption, their need of Divine support.

He has left us, and the Church has found just what He predicted, that much which was needless while He stayed became needful when He was gone. Had He stayed there would have been no need of Sunday, for His presence would have been Sunday in itself, and have made every day alike. There would have been no need of festivals to remind us of the events of His life, for to see Him would be in itself a perpetual reminder. There would have been no need of fasts, for how could the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom was with them? But when He was gone all these things became necessary. There may have been times when the Church perhaps felt little need of them, times of high-wrought religious feeling, when, as it were, every day was a sort of festival, or consecrated to some religious service; when, in fact, regular observances disappeared, not because there were no observances at all, but because the irregular observances were so numerous as to swallow up all others. But for all ordinary times the Church found that she must do what our Lord implied that she would have to do, provide for the needs of human nature in the ordinary fashion, and make rules to keep alive the warmth and power of faith, just as rules are made for the purposes of any ordinary human society. It is true that when we compare the Church in this condition with what she was when the presence of the Lord was either overshadowing

her or had so lately been removed as still to leave the thrill of its truth behind, we are tempted to say that this cold service cannot be a true representative of that. We are tempted to fancy that these observances must be a hindrance, not a help; that what is wanted is power and life and passion, not recurring seasons and reminders of great events and services in due order. But it is not so. Life and power are wanted, but they are not hindered by the rules of religious life; and meanwhile those very rules often aid them in their weakness. The return of Sunday at short intervals keeps alive in many what would otherwise perish, and is found a help of the greatest value to all. The return of Christmas-day, of Easter, of Whitsuntide, preach to us with the voice of the past, and often compel a hearing when nothing else could compel it. Our Lord knew our nature when He said that when He was gone much would be needed, much would be useful, which when He was there seemed all out of place.

What is true of the Church is true of each one of us. Observances have two uses for every soul. If the Lord is absent, it is by them that we seek Him. If the Lord is present, it is by them that we meet Him. He leaves us altogether sometimes, or seems to do so. Perhaps we have driven Him forth by doing wrong, for He cannot stay where sin is. We know that He is not with us, because we know that we have sinned and have not repented, and the sin still stands before us whenever we try to go to Him. We ought to confess, or we ought to surrender some pleasure, or we ought to make some reparation, or we ought to force ourselves to do some duty, and we

shrink back from this, and Christ is not with us, for we would not have Him. Or it may be that we do not recollect any fault that has compelled Him to leave us, but somehow we *are* left. We have lost our warmth, our resolution, our interest in His service. We do not care to please Him. We know our duties, but we have no desire to do them. Christians have sometimes to pass through such states as this. But in either case, whether we are conscious of sin or not, whether what keeps us away from God our Father be the sense of wrong or coldness of heart, it is quite certain that the recurrence of Christian seasons is often the greatest aid. How often has Good Friday done for us what we seemed previously quite unable to do for ourselves! How often has Easter Day given a Christian new life and spirit! How often has Christmas made him kinder, pleasanter, gentler! How often has the Holy Communion given him power, as it were, to begin again! If we need repentance, the order of Christian observances gives the opportunity; smooths the way; makes repentance easier, more natural; supplies the motive. If we are cold, what can warm us more than to think of the life of Christ, and what can remind us of His life more than the services of His Church?

This then is the use, and this, too, is the test of all religious observances. Do they remind us of Christ, do they recall us to Him, do they make return to Him easier? If they do, they have done their work; if they do not, we have not used them right.

This season of Lent is intended to remind us of the duty of cleansing the life. We have all of us many and

grievous faults. It is good to think of them sometimes, that we may know ourselves, and that we may know how to deal with *them.* It is good to find out where lie our weak points, which need special watchfulness; what are our special temptations, which we ought if we can to avoid; what are the studies, the occupations, the friends that help us most to do our duty; what are the trials that God in His providence has set before us, and requires us to undergo cheerfully and quietly; what are our great wants before we can attain to a truly Christian character. It is good to see to this, and now is the time to do it. But all through this there must be that perpetual thought of Christ which gives to all these recurring times and seasons their true value. There is a grief at having sinned, which all men must feel if they have any right feeling; but in the Christian this is merged in the grief at having left his Father's house, and no longer being cheered with his Father's smile. There is a desire to fashion the life and character by a noble model, which cannot be wanting if there is any nobleness in the soul; but in the Christian this is merged in the desire to serve his Master, and win his Master's love.

And this makes the Christian use of all religious observance quite independent of cultivation, of knowledge, of growth in years, of length of experience. Rightly to see the bearing of all our faults is often very difficult; and those whose youth prevents them from knowing much about life, cannot always tell which sin will have most serious consequences, which habits are most to be

striven with, which falls require the most earnest repentance; but all can understand what it is to desire to please our Lord or not to desire it; what it is to be able to pray to Him, or to feel kept back by knowledge of our sinfulness; what is meant by obedience and submission, and what by neglect and wilful turning away.

The season of Lent is to the Christian the return of the prodigal son. We have wasted our substance in riotous living. We have wasted our hearts in folly which sought for the pleasure of the moment; in the indulgence of cowardice, which flinched away from what was disagreeable; on the selfishness which took no thought of others, and in all this we have forgotten God. And while we forget God it is quite certain that we cannot be really happy or hearty, we cannot find true enjoyment; our conscience looks on and damps all our joy by its look of pain, and what we expected to be most delightful has turned out a disappointment. Let us take this chance to return. Let us go back with the words of the Prodigal, 'I will arise and go to my Father.'

February 14, 1866. (Ash Wednesday.)

SERMON XIX.

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

ST. MATTHEW xiii. 31, 32.

'*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*'

THERE are very few of our Lord's parables that can be illustrated so fully, few that get so clear a confirmation from all experience as this. And yet to accept the principle and really live by it, requires the very faith of which the parable speaks. Indeed, when we set to work to explain the parable to ourselves, we always do so with a sense of wonder, as if the truth taught by it were something strange, unexpected, paradoxical. That the Church should begin with being so little and end with being so great, that the power of the Gospel should at first lay hold of so little of our lives, and end with laying hold of the whole; in the one case we see a marvel, and

in the other we acknowledge that it ought to be so, but with a kind of feeling that it very often is not so. And yet in reality the truth is receiving illustrations every day. We cannot read any history attentively without finding it verified in every country in the world. We cannot read any biography without seeing many an instance of it. The truth can be seen easily enough, but to believe it, is undeniably hard; and we waste our lives because we cannot bring ourselves to do so.

Look at history, and see how true the doctrine is, not only of the kingdom of heaven, but of every other power that has really held sway among man. In almost all cases the great, the permanent work has been done, not by those who seemed to do very much, but by those who seemed to do very little. Our Lord's founding of the Church was but the most striking instance of a universal rule. He seemed to all outside spectators to do almost nothing. The Roman rulers hardly knew of His name. At the time of His death, most assuredly no statesman living would have spoken of what He had done as having any real importance or likely to exert any real influence. And those who had heard of Him would most assuredly have thought most of just that which we know was worth least. Had they tried to give an account of His power, they would have recounted how a great multitude followed Him into Jerusalem with palm branches and with songs of triumph, and this they would have considered a proof that He could make some impression. But they would have said nothing, and could have said nothing, of the small band of Apostles and disciples who had drunk

in from their association with Him an impression that can never now be effaced from the souls of mankind. And this, I say, is but the greatest instance of a universal rule. There are two ways in which great men rule other men. They either sway the masses of men by an irresistible influence, or they impress on a few, either by personal intercourse, or by writings, the stamp of their own character, their own thoughts. And no doubt there are some who have done both. But when we look at the work of these men, it always seems the grander to lead the great multitudes. Had we lived in the days of David, his kingly rule and the power with which he bowed the hearts of his countrymen, would have seemed to us something more glorious than the poetry by which he earned the title of the Psalmist. Had we lived in the days of Samuel, we should have thought more of his administration of the nation than of the institution of the schools of the Prophets. If we turn to other histories beside those of the chosen people, there can be little doubt that had we lived at the time we should have thought more of the work of Pericles than of the work of Socrates. The few men whom Socrates taught to think would seem a poor result of a great man's labour in comparison with the splendour with which Pericles surrounded his country; and yet the thoughts of Socrates are stirring us still, while the work of Pericles is nothing but a splendid memory.

Some men have worked in both ways. But our Lord chose only one, and that the one that would seem the most obscure, the most uncertain. He taught the multi-

tudes; but His chief aim was certainly not to impress them. So little indeed had He attached them to Himself, that they were ready at the instigation of the priests to cry out, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him,' as soon as ever they learnt, truly or falsely, that He did not fall in with their cherished prejudice of the sacredness of the temple. His work was to stamp the truth upon a few; but to stamp it so deep that nothing could afterwards efface it.

When He did this, what was He doing? He was sowing the seed; the seed whose fruit was not yet, whose perfect fruit was not to be gathered, as it has since turned out, for many centuries; the seed which seemed small and perishable, but was certain to grow into a great tree. And so, too, has all the greatest work been done both before and after, not often by producing immediate results, but by sowing seeds. So have sciences all grown, not from brilliant declarations to the world, but from patient labour, and quiet thought, and language addressed to the few who think. So has all growth in politics always begun in the secret thoughts of men who have found the truth, and have committed it to books or to chosen learners. The true powers of human life are contained in those seeds, out of which alone comes any real and permanent good.

All this is plain enough; and though we may be dazzled sometimes by the lower kind of greatness, the greatness of the man who can reach many souls, but can make a deep mark on none, yet, when we reflect, we know perfectly well that the other kind of greatness is not only

higher but truer. And yet for all that we still find it very hard to live by this plain truth ourselves. It is very hard to force ourselves to feel that the power of life is to be found inside, not outside; in the heart and thoughts, not in the visible actions and show; in the living seed, not in the plant which has no root.

How often do men cultivate the garden of their souls just in the other way! How often do we try and persevere in trying to make a sort of neat show of outer good qualities without anything within to correspond, just like children who plant blossoms without any roots in the ground to make a pretty show for the hour! We find faults in our lives and we cut off the weed, but we do not root it up; we find something wanting in ourselves, and we supply it not by sowing the divine seed of a heavenly principle, but by copying the deeds that the principle ought to produce.

So we strive to cure our tongues of falsehood, not by cherishing an enthusiasm for the truth, but by dwelling on the pain of detection. So we try to keep ourselves to our duty, not by dwelling on the excellence of pleasing God, but by the thought of the success, or the distinction, or the pleasure that will be the reward of having done it. So we change all our desire to be good into a desire for the comfort, the consideration, the freedom from painful thoughts, the happiness, that attend upon being good. We want the plant, the leaves, the flower; but we undervalue the seed, which after all is everything.

It is precisely this want of faith in the excellence of the seed that tempts us to do evil that good may come.

This temptation always takes the form of looking at the evil as a very little evil, and the good as a very great good. The good, perhaps, is some great pleasure or some great advantage; or, perhaps, if we have risen above that, the good is some pleasure to some one else, or it is a saving of some pain, or it is for his moral and spiritual advantage, or for his happiness. But if we knew, as we ought to know, that the seed is the important thing, we should see at once that doing evil that good may come is simply impossible, for out of evil evil is sure to come, and no amount of good can counterbalance it. The good indeed that is sought in that way is not good at all, for it does not grow out of good seed. It may wear the guise of good; God's Providence may in His mysterious way make it a part of His machinery for producing good, for that He can do with everything; but good it is not and cannot be.

It is this which so constantly tempts us to correct what men see, and leave alone what men do not see. Faults which get blamed by others, we too blame because we see the plant and we judge by it. Faults which are hidden within we judge lightly, because they are as yet only seeds, and we think them of little consequence. It is much to lose your temper; it is little to allow bad thoughts to occupy your solitary hours. It is much to make yourself ridiculous by conceited talk; it is little to let your imagination dwell on yourself and your importance in the eyes of your fellows. It is much to neglect God openly; it is little to forget Him entirely. Yet these inner faults are the assured seeds of other

faults by-and-bye, and there is no temptation in the whole world so fearfully terrible as to be haunted incessantly by an evil thought, and to have lost the power of forcing yourself to think of something else. Such a temptation grows by its own indulgence till its force is almost intolerable; and yet at first it was but an evil seed, a mere grain of mustard seed.

All through our lives we are met by opportunities to choose between what is really good, really and truly good and known to be good, but for all that apparently a trifle; and what is not good, but is pleasant or fine or alluring, what brings with it or promises to bring with it advantage, or gratification to vanity, or great delight; and the one seems so little and the other so much. Brethren, that little thing is the Kingdom of Heaven. It is little, but it is the seed of everything. It is little, and seems worthless; but if it be truly the right and good thing to do, it is of more real value than all the great things put together. Out of it one day shall come a happiness of a different kind from all other happiness, and an excellence better than all other excellence. That little thing contains the power which really governs not the world only but the whole universe of God. That little thing, when your eyes are opened in the other world, will seem to your astonished sight greater than the greatest of all things, be they what they may. That little thing is stronger than the strongest force, is higher than the highest heavens, is more imperishable than all the creation of God, for it is the voice of God Himself. Oh that we could as easily live by this truth as we can be

absolutely sure of it! Oh that we could stamp it on our wills as certainly as we can grasp it with our minds! Oh that Christ Himself would write it as with a pen of iron on our souls, and never let us forget it for a moment, for then we should be wholly His!

February 25, 1866.

SERMON XX.

ABIDING IN CHRIST.

ST. JOHN XV. 4.

'Abide in me, and I in you.'

IF there is any lesson which experience forces on the heart, which lays a deeper hold on the soul, as the soul gets a better knowledge of itself, which sinks into us in proportion to our endeavour to rise above ourselves, it is that the source of all spiritual life and health is in the thought of God, and that without that thought we cannot really live. Our life is surrounded, indeed, by all manner of aids and disciplines, and corrections and instructions. And these sometimes do so much for us when we use them right, that we half fancy that they are sufficient for our need, and that by their help we shall become what we wish, stronger, and juster, and truer, and more generous, and sweeter. The example of good companions, the strong power of regular duties, the incessant warnings and checks administered half unconsciously by society, the noble thoughts that come across us now and then, the fine characters and the great

deeds that we hear of, the marvellous power of the Word of God, the sweetness that sometimes follows on any worthy effort,—all these things do so much for us that we fancy that they will do everything. And, perhaps, too, we are strong, and feel that we are strong. We can control ourselves, and we delight to know it. We see before our eyes an ideal of life, generous, and unselfish, and high, and yet with a place among our fellows, and enjoyments of its own, and a suitable service as it were to be rendered to God; and we think that we can attain this, and by God's help that we will. And though there is no direct guide in all this, and we acknowledge, and are quite sincere in acknowledging, that our strength must all come from God, yet we think that God has really given us this strength, and that it is now our own, while it still comes from Him. All this is natural, and I am not blaming it. Yet, as time goes on, one conviction gains on the soul, one experience colours all the others, one truth seems to be ever graven more and more deeply on the heart, graven by every temptation, by every infirmity, by every fall, at last even by every victory; that all our victory leaves something unconquered, and all our progress leaves something unattained, and that at the last we can but throw ourselves down at the feet of God, and beg for the love of Christ that that may be done for us which we cannot do for ourselves. We are taught to say it from early years. We are taught to recognise that we cannot walk alone. We are taught to pray, and we believe that we cannot walk as we ought without the help which we are to get in prayer. But

much as we believe it one year, so much more keenly do we feel it the next year, that it shall seem as if we had not believed it before at all. Nay, it is not only that our progress leaves something unattained, it is not only that our victory is incomplete. We look back at last, and feel that our progress is really nothing, that we have to do all over again, that we have not yet even begun, that what we fancied was generosity was but high spirits and good humour, that what we thought was unselfishness was but the surrender of what we did not greatly value, that what we thought was our sweetness and kindness was but a love of popularity, that we have only been successful when we have never been really tried. And we come back at last to the love of God as the one thing that can keep the soul alive, the one thing that saves us from falling back into utter hardness, the one power that still renews us when all our own strength fails, that love of God which we read this day in the Cross of Christ, that love which somehow lifts the sinner out of his sin, and makes the desperate man repent once more, though he has told himself that repentance is in vain, and breaks in the hard crust of our fancied virtues, and softens the heart which has begun to be contented with its own evil, and, in spite of a man's own self, still revives yet once again the hope and the wish to come back to his Father.

Think of the infinite patience of that love! St. Paul is struck with the fact that Christ died for men while they were yet sinners. But, surely, it is as strange a fact, if it be not stranger, that He should not forsake those who have learnt the story of His death, who have been touched

with the power of His love, and yet have been sinners still. It was strange to St. Paul that he should have been converted from a blind fanaticism, and that God should have loved him enough to bring him home at a time when he was persecuting the Church of His Son, and making the Cross a reproach. But let us look into our own hearts, into our own lives, and what do we see? Broken resolutions; hearts warmed to-day to some sort of earnestness, and to-morrow turning coldly back to what we had forsaken; prayers, sincere prayers, followed by lives that made those prayers a mockery; temptations recklessly played with; temper allowed to rule the soul; unkind thoughts where love was due; neglected devotions; weakness; vanity; self-seeking; shifting our own blame on others, if not in act yet in our own thoughts; altogether, if not a life of downright evil, yet a life that we must confess to be totally unlike the pattern which we had set ourselves to copy. There is nothing, perhaps, surprising in our finding that we are still alive, that God has not visited us with some visible punishment. We do not expect this, because we know that that is not His way of governing. But that our hearts should still have any feeling left for what is right, that we should still be stung as we sometimes are by conscience, that we should still find some touch of that heavenly power which renews the soul, is not this a patience of love which can only come from Christ Himself? Would it be strange if, after being once or twice warned, we were left to ourselves? Would it be strange if our hearts were left to become quite hard, so that no good thoughts could soften them, and no

good impulses could move them? Yet it is not so. Again and again, and yet again, does God move our souls within us, and once more give us at least feeling enough to be impressed with what we hear, and with what we see others do, and with what we remember that we ourselves resolved. With inexhaustible patience is the message of the Gospel, the promise of forgiveness, the offer of love, repeated in our hearing, whispered by our consciences, made to thrill through our hearts. And in spite of sins so often repeated, that we can hardly believe them forgiven, we still hear the ever-renewed call to repentance. How soon would our own patience have been worn out if a brother had thus repeatedly sinned against us! Look back at your life and at your besetting sin, and think, if that had been an offence by one of your friends against yourself, how surely your patience with his fault would have been exhausted long before this. And yet God's patience is not yet worn out with you, or you would not feel even the wish to return to Him again. Nay, our patience with ourselves is sooner worn out than God's patience with us. Sooner do we say, 'It's of no use; I cannot help it; I must give up this unavailing struggle;' than does He say, 'This is an unprofitable tree; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?'

Yet, again, if God's patience be so infinite, so is His forgiveness absolute. There is no question, we know that there is no question, of great sins or of little sins when we clasp the Cross. We know that had Judas repented at that awful time, had the chief priests been converted by what they saw, they would have been as

freely covered by the overshadowing love of God and of the Saviour as the penitent thief. In striving against our own sins, we cannot avoid making the distinction. We know that one fault we can crush with an effort, and another will cost us all the strength of all our being. We know that one leaves a stain behind which will redden the cheek for years to think of, and another will be forgotten as soon as it is forsaken, and rightly forgotten. We know that one will alienate a friend for months, perhaps for years, perhaps make it impossible for him now to treat us *quite* as before; and another will seem a trifle in his eyes. We know that one will do much evil, perhaps more evil in the issue than we can estimate; while another, as far as we can see, will have no bad consequences at all. We know that one is against light, another comes from ignorance; one is wilful, another is from weakness; one is untempted, and another is due to strong temptation. But when the question is, whether God will forgive the penitent, all this is beside the point. God will forgive; Christ will take you to His arms; you shall have the blessing of peace in yourself; you shall feel that your Father is smiling upon you, whatever may have been your sin, whatever may yet be your punishment.

It is this fulness, this fulness of patience, this fulness of forgiveness, which brings the Christian back to the Cross of Christ at last, as the one spring and source of all Christian life. All else is proved to be, however useful, yet still insufficient; all else, whatever good it may do, yet seems somehow to fall short of that one thing that the soul cannot spare, the smile on the face of God.

Somehow, when we fail elsewhere, we seem to know that it was natural that we should fail. We are not much surprised, however much we may be pained, by finding that our own strength of will has proved too weak, or by finding that long-maintained habits have given way to the presence of new temptation, or by seeing that clearer knowledge by no means implies greater purity or more spiritual life. But when we come to the Cross of Christ, to the love which stands unparalleled by anything else that we know, we know, we feel that it cannot fail, for the fountain is supplied by the inexhaustible waters of Heaven itself.

Why, then, do we come back every year with fresh sorrow that last year should have done so little for us? Why should Good Friday so often seem unlike all other days? Why should we come, not to be helped onward, but to be saved from going backward? Why should we sometimes wish that we could recall the warmth of former Good Fridays? Why should we feel that we need ask no to be sanctified but to be saved, as it were to be saved anew? Is it not because we have not yet learnt to live by the words of our Lord, 'Abide in Me, and I in you'? Good Friday comes but once a year, and when it comes let us endeavour to fill our hearts so full of the Cross that we shall have no room for any other thought but what flows from that. But let us not, let us not go away and make the days that follow just what they would have been if Good Friday never came at all. Let us endeavour to make Good Friday the day for beginning to abide in Christ; and that is to make the thought of

Christ, and Christ's will, and Christ's love, a constant companion in the secret of our conscience. He can do what we cannot. He can heal, and He can strengthen, and He can purify, if we will but abide in Him. We are like the Prodigal Son, in our readiness to leave our Father's house; perhaps, God grant that it be so, we are as ready also to come back again in penitence, and ask to be treated as one of the hired servants. But, oh! do we not add to this, that we repeat our wandering even after we have returned; and let our hearts go away again, though we have been forgiven and embraced? Abide in Christ, and let Christ abide in you. Add to your good resolutions, to your prayers, to your watchfulness over yourself, this one thing more; whenever your conscience speaks to you, recall to your thoughts the love of Christ, and try to remember that you belong to Him.

March 30, 1866. (Good Friday.)

SERMON XXI.

MARTHA AND MARY.

ST. LUKE x. 41, 42.

'*And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*'

WHEN we compare Martha and Mary, we must of course remember that the contrast is not between right and wrong, between the Christian and unchristian character, but between the greater and the less, between the higher and the lower. It is as if we were to compare holiness to goodness, saintliness to excellence. Both were true disciples. Both loved the Lord, and loved Him from their hearts. Both were blessed with more than common nearness to His person. Both would gladly have been spent in His service. But the one saw with more heavenly eyes, was moved by a purer and more perfect love, had penetrated into a deeper secret. Nor, again, must we think of Martha as merely active, Mary as simply passive:

as if Mary would not have sprung even from the feet of her Lord to do His bidding, would not have been as ready as Martha to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to take in the stranger, to visit the sick, to do whatever the Lord would have pronounced His own proper work. But Mary knew her guest. She knew that she was more truly entertaining Him by sitting at His feet than by cumbering herself about much serving. Her quicker instinct, her purer and more heavenly love, told her what would best prove her devotion. And so she chose the good part which was not to be taken from her. Nothing would be a greater mistake than to fancy that Mary is the type of the dreamy character, difficult to rouse to needful action, given up to ideals never to be realised; full of excellent fancies, but with no self-sacrifice. Such a character, self-deluded by its own thoughts, tinged always with a strain of indolent selfishness, hiding its own self-indulgence under the appearance of longing for excellence, needs but to be known to make it impossible that we should think that our Lord would call its choice a good part. But we know that as Mary cumbered herself little about serving, because she felt she was giving a better service, so if the Lord had said, 'Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come follow Me,' she would gladly have done His bidding. Her choice was not the choice of dreaminess, nor of self-indulgence, nor of apathy, but of child-like love, instinctively knowing what offering would be most pleasing.

The contrast between Martha and Mary appears in our daily life, most often as a contrast between doing and

being. God has planted in us so strong an impulse towards doing, that into that, almost by a necessity of our nature, our main strength ordinarily flows. He has made us restless in childhood, active and energetic in youth, that we may not sink into sloth. There is an inherent delight in our own activity which makes all in some degree, and some, perhaps, even to excess, long to be on the move, to have a share, perhaps, if we can, to take a lead, in all that is to be done. Every one knows that an unemployed life is not the happiest, and if no employment is a necessity of our position, we are forced to make employment, or otherwise we are wearied out with having nothing to do. And with this natural spur to activity, God has further linked some of the highest gifts that He has put within our reach. It is generally in active service that we learn the warmest love. Those to whom we give our labour almost always at last win our hearts also. Those for whom we have made sacrifices we involuntarily cherish with the truest affection. If you wish to learn to love, the way to it is generally to serve. So everything that the patriot does for his country makes him love that country more. So a kindness done by one friend to another is a stronger tie than even the gratitude of the receiver. So our fathers and mothers, having spent themselves in our service, love us with a tenderness which nothing but God's love can come near. So we cannot help feeling that our Lord loves us all the more because He died for us, and as He grew in wisdom and grew in grace, and was made perfect by the life that He lived, so, too, His very love

grew by the sacrifices which it made for us, and, having the Cross, we shall also have all things.

It is this impulse of our nature which is in itself so excellent, which, nevertheless, being but a stepping-stone to the highest, may wrongly take the place of the highest. Perhaps we know well that to be is, after all, higher than to do. Perhaps we can quite see that the heavenly mind, and the pure soul, and the inner life which is true quite through, and which the nearer you approach it only shines with a purer and more unearthly light, is higher, is better, is more God-like, than any service that we can render. Perhaps when we compare the two, we are able to prefer in our judgment the Christian saint to the Christian hero, the highest of those who have attained to the life of inward holiness as the highest of those whose chief excellence is in their active service. Yet in our ordinary life, in our hopes and wishes for ourselves, in our judgment of our own conduct, the lower often supplants the higher. In our watch over our own lives, how frequently do we think little of those forms of our besetting sin which do not come out into act, but remain in the thoughts, in the undisciplined desires, in the uncontrolled imaginations! How often will the recollection of an angry word, an unkind deed, sting the conscience; while the cherished feeling of discontent, the wrong brooded over, the personal slight allowed to dwell on the thoughts, is treated as nothing! And I do not say, observe, that the deed is worse than the mere thought. But the deed is often treated as the only reality; the wrong thought or wrong feeling, as if it were of no account

whatever. How terrible is the thought of staining the lips with falsehood; how slight a burden it is to have allowed ourselves to be falsely praised! How readily sometimes will the whole man be given up to a work to be done; how reluctantly does the same man shrink from self-examination, from inward communion with his conscience, from the exertion of thinking, perhaps even from prayer! We know when we force ourselves to compare the two, that the inner life is the spring, the power, the true life of the outer life. And yet to make the heart pure is often infinitely harder to us than to make the deeds pure; and not only infinitely harder, but we feel as if it contained no reward in itself, as the other does. He that does what God will have him do, finds ever a sort of satisfaction in it; there is, quite apart from all self-complacency, a natural rest, as it were, in having thus poured out the life into visible obedience. He that has made any outer sacrifice has a peculiar happiness which always belongs to self-sacrifice; and it is right that he should, for God gives it, and by means of it pains are made the sources of the purest pleasures. But he that is trying to be what God would have him be, a learner, sitting at the Lord's feet, can find no such reward. His reward is the sense of being God's child, in itself, indeed, a higher reward, a purer happiness than any other; but if he cannot attain to that reward, there is none at all.

And to this must be added the strong desire implanted in our nature to see the results of our labours, and so to be assured that our whole toil has not been wasted.

This ever makes us long for that service to be required of us which can produce fruits; fruits that can be recognised by ourselves, if not by others. We are more ready to do the work of those servants to whom the Lord, when He departed, gave, to one five talents, to another two, to every man according to his several ability, than to be put among those waiting virgins who had nothing to do but to keep their lamps burning till the bridegroom came. Of course human weakness readily enough acquiesces, at least for a time, in doing nothing, if nothing be required of it. To have no duties put upon us, to have no sacrifices demanded of us, to be required neither to labour, nor to endure, nor to give up, nor to fight,—this seems, and for a time it is, easy enough. To wait with the waiting virgins seems no hard task. But to wait, and meanwhile to keep the lamp burning, that is not easy at all. To be asked for no service, and yet never cease loving; to have nothing to do, and yet to keep the heart alive and warm, and trusting and obedient; to do nothing, and yet be ready to do anything, this is not so easy. Nay, those who have so given themselves to the outer life and outer service that they have lost all true hold on the inner, they find this waiting only another word for sinking. They feel the need of something to do to keep themselves alive, and the spiritual life dies within them because they cannot rise to the higher task.

And yet, if we can but get ourselves to see it, this sitting at the Lord's feet to be taught by Him, has in it a greater power of service than all the many things

about which poor Martha is so perplexed. The labour of love in the name of Christ, the earnest exertion, the unflagging perseverance, the refusal to be defeated, which is the excellence of the active servant, will not do so much as the steady, unfailing purity of that unearthly light which the waiting virgin holds in her hands as long as she remains on earth. The active service itself in reality only gets its value from the same fire, ever burning within the soul. And this we know full well. We know full well, that unless the fire of Christian self-surrender be within, all that you can see without is but hollow and dead, at the very best a mere part of the machinery of the world, having no more true spiritual value than the revolution of the earth on its axis. But what we are slow to know is that the inner fire, even when it has no outer service to set in motion, even when it burns alone, simply for the sake of burning, in the presence of the Lord, is still doing its appointed service, is still a power in the world of spirits, still preaches and teaches, and inspires and upholds, and is a channel of grace connecting earth and heaven, while it seems to be so still and so unemployed. Such lives are fountains of holiness, and nothing else has equal value.

Know, then, that to be, is infinitely higher than to do; that to be thoroughly true is a higher service, a larger service, a more lasting service, than to spread the truth; that to be pure in heart brings you nearer to God, does more for your fellow-men, bears a more excellent fruit, than a life spent in helping others to be pure; that to be just is more excellent than to aid justice; that to be a

Christian makes more Christians than to preach the Gospel. Let us not disparage active service; for, after all, if you really have attained to the inner life, you cannot draw back from the outer, whenever the outer is required; the one is a part of the other. But know that the chief value of all outer service is that it aids the inner; it is the stepping-stone, it is the appointed discipline, it is the way marked out by which we come nearer to God, and offer to Him something still better. By duty we learn love; by self-sacrifice we kindle our own hearts; by obedience we approach the Throne ever nearer and nearer. And this is the chief value of all obedience. Know, lastly, that no offering that you can make is valued so highly in God's sight, is so precious in itself, is such a blessing to all others, as the offering of your own soul. Offer God your life certainly; but still more, offer Him yourself. Give Him your service as far as He will accept it; but still more, give Him your own inner spirit. Do what He wills, as far as you know it; but still more, be what He wills. For that is the good part, and if you choose that, nothing can possibly take it from you.

May 13, 1866.

SERMON XXII.

MYSTERIES.

ST. JOHN xvi. 7.

'Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.'

THERE are mysteries revealed in the Bible, and it would be strange if there were not. It would be strange for two reasons: first, because it would be a very marvellous thing if a Book which professed to tell us anything about the other world, and about the God who made both that world and this, should have nothing to say which human intellects could not completely grasp; and secondly, because we have in ourselves a kind of affinity for mystery, a nature prepared to receive it, an instinct that seems to demand it, an indefinite expectation which only the mysterious is capable of satisfying. On the one hand, we know the feebleness and narrowness of our own intellects; we know how long it takes to find out things which when found out seem very plain; how much we cannot explain even as it is; how strange and inexplicable is the working of our own hearts; how little we

can predict our own impulses, or tell how events shall affect us, or analyse the motives of our own conduct, or explain our own principles; nay, how hard it often is to state clearly our own thoughts and feelings;—and, knowing all this, we cannot suppose that there will not be much of what belongs to the other world, which we shall neither be able fully to grasp nor clearly to state. We cannot fathom the depths of humanity; how absurd it would be to expect to understand the Deity. We feel that there is much which we cannot really know in our fellow-creatures, much which we cannot know in our own selves; how much more must there be which we cannot know in God. If our knowledge of man is imperfect, our knowledge of God must be, as St. Paul says, by means of a mirror darkly. But, on the other hand, as I said before, this is not all that leads us to expect mysteries in the Bible. It is a need of our nature to look for something mysterious. It is said that a great sculptor once announced that he knew his art was failing him; for he had for the first time quite come up to his own ideal. What he said was but expressing in one special province of human thought what we all find in all that we think. When we have reached the summit we know that this means the exhaustion of our own powers, not the exhaustion of what we are seeking to know. There is ever in all that is most excellent in man a higher than the highest. Watch the movements of sects and schools of thought. Their tendency is always to make their doctrines, their ordinary teaching, their rules of life, their modes of expression, their leading thoughts more and more reasonable, more

defensible, more in harmony with the broadest truth. They generally begin with a tinge of fanaticism. But the necessity of defending themselves, the perpetual friction of controversy, the inevitable power of reason, wears off all that is peculiar, all that is founded on prejudice, all that is one-sided. They are forced in defending themselves to become plainer, simpler, more intelligible. Now I am not saying that this is wrong. On the contrary, it is inevitable. It is inevitable that reason should steadily, quietly, perseveringly assert itself. Surely then, as such systems or sects or schools of thought thus become more reasonable they will gain in strength, in endurance, in hold upon men. Not at all. Precisely when they become reasonable and defensible they begin to die and make room for other schools and other systems. I do not mean that they die and leave no trace behind them. No; they leave very often the deepest marks of their presence. But they are no longer predominant; they lose their distinctiveness; they no longer bind men together; they lose their character as schools or systems. What power they have is unconscious power. They no longer have a separate life; they are absorbed; they work, as far as they do work, unseen. In ordinary conversation we should speak of them as dead. Now, why is this? Look closely and you will always find that in proportion as they satisfy reason, in that proportion do they lose their force; and for this cause, that they satisfy reason too well; they leave unsatisfied the imperative instinct which ever repeats that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. Their very completeness,

their very clearness seems to bring them down from heaven to earth. They seem to be the voice, not of the divine reason, but of the human reason. And so one after another we see opinions and principles and systems of doctrine rise into great power, and when they have done their work pass away; but they pass away not because they have been defeated in argument, but because they have so accommodated themselves to the demands of the human intellect that they can no longer convey the impression that they are above that intellect. And when they come down to the level of the human soul, the human soul refuses to bow down before them any longer. It is for the same reason that it is not the most reasonable doctrine but the most extravagant doctrine that will hold men, if it hold them at all, in the firmest grip. There are few doctrines more incapable of being reconciled to reason than ultra-calvinism. But there are also few that fasten upon those who accept it with such invincible tenacity.

So, then, in the Bible we expect to find mysteries because of its subject; but still more because of its purpose. Its subject is the relation between God and man, and that subject must contain much that is mysterious. Its purpose is to lay hold of the human soul with divine authority, and the human soul could be held by nothing which does not satisfy the instinctive need of mysteries above human comprehension.

Starting with this, let us observe what is the mode in which these mysteries are revealed. Is there anything peculiar in the form of these revelations? anything which

makes the mysteries in the Bible like the mysteries in nature, not like the mysteries of human speculation; for we know that the mysteries of nature only grow upon us the more we study, while the mysteries of human philosophy are always gradually explained away till they disappear and in their disappearance carry with them the life of the philosophy to which they belong.

The peculiarity of the Bible mysteries is this, that they are always associated with life, never with mere thought; they always present themselves to the view of the disciple rather than to that of the mere student; they always address the heart quite as much as the intellect. Observe how very little there is of what can be called speculative revelation in the Bible. The opening verses of St. John's Gospel and the beginning of the Book of Genesis are very nearly the only parts of the Bible that could in any way be placed under this head. And even these, being introductions, almost compel us to interpret them by the narratives that follow, and so lose their speculative character. No; the Bible all through, while it fully recognises that true thought is bound up with the highest life, yet almost invariably avoids addressing the thought alone. It teaches us not how to think, but how to live, and treats the thinking as a part of living.

I will take the doctrine contained in those words of our Lord's with which I began, namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit, as an instance of the method which is always observed in the Bible in revealing mysteries. There is nowhere any distinct separate statement in the Bible of the attributes of the Holy Ghost, or of the part which He

takes to Himself in dealing with us. What the Holy Ghost precisely is, and even what He precisely does, is nowhere defined. What are His offices in other worlds than this; what is His precise nature; how we are to reconcile His being what we call a separate Person with the Oneness of God, we are not told. There is no philosophy of His existence given us. There is nothing that can be made a matter of mere thought. All speculation on His being must be got by inference; for direct statement of this kind there is none. But if this is not given, what is given? Wherever the Holy Spirit acts on our life, there we are told how we can see His action. Wherever He can comfort, strengthen, enlighten, there we meet with a promise that we shall find Him. Whatever is needed to enable us to reverence Him, worship Him, obey Him, that is revealed. Our Lord is going away, and the hearts of His disciples sink as they wonder what they shall possibly do without Him. To them forthwith the revelation is made, that when the one guide is gone the other will come. The Pharisees in their bitterness are running fearfully near that last state of sin which cannot be forgiven, because he who has committed it ceases to care for good, and therefore cannot repent. To them forthwith the warning is given, that as the Holy Spirit comes nearest to man's individual life, so is sin against Him the last, the worst, the only hopeless sin. The converts of St. Paul are tossed about with all manner of fears, tried by terrors of persecution, seduced sometimes by plausible false teaching, needing something to hold them fast in days of trouble and perplexity. To them St. Paul speaks

of that Holy Spirit who is the earnest of an inheritance, whom we must not quench, whom we must not grieve, in whom we must walk, without whom we do not belong to Christ.

In this way, and in this way only, is the Holy Ghost revealed in the Bible. We think of God the Father as the source of all being, the original Creator of all things. We think of God the Son as the Lord Jesus who once lived among men, who was crucified for us on the Cross, who founded His Church to keep alive His revelation among men. We think of the Holy Ghost as the Power that once inspired Apostles and Prophets, and now speaks to our own hearts and uses our natural consciences as His mouthpiece whereby His voice can reach us. Thus far the nature of God has been revealed to us. Behind that we cannot penetrate. But it is sometimes asked, Why speak of the Holy Spirit as a Person? why not rather an influence or a presence? why speak of Him as if in any sense distinct and separate? To which we can only answer that we use the language which the Bible uses, and we can find no better. Our Lord speaks of the Comforter as distinct from Himself, for the one comes when the other goes; as distinct from the Father, for the one sends and the other is sent. Our Lord speaks of Him again as a Person, who can convince, who can teach, who can guide, who can receive what He is to tell, who can testify. Nay more, our Lord's declaration that sin against the Holy Ghost is worse than all other sin implies that our conception of an influence or a presence is not adequate. For we attach a kind of superiority to the conception of

a Person which here we cannot do without. A mere law or rule however universal, a mere influence however spiritual and however heavenly, means to us not something higher than ourselves but lower: in as far as that which has life is in itself higher than that which has not. And therefore, as the only conception that measures the language of the Bible, we speak of the Holy Ghost as a Person. But we know that this word leaves an unfathomable mystery behind it, and we do not pretend that when we have said the best that our human speech is capable of saying, we have really set forth the whole nature of God.

Lastly, I will say one word more on the bearing of this mystery on our own lives. In ordinary times our consciences seem to us no more than one of the faculties of the soul. The guidance that they give does not seem very much to differ in kind from the light given by the understanding, from the influence exerted by the feelings. But every now and then we know that this is not so. Every now and then that spiritual voice which we call the conscience seems to rise up within us into a separate being; seems to command, to forbid, to warn with an awful authority; seems to assert a claim to obedience even to the death; seems to sting and pierce, or else to inspire or uplift the soul with a power altogether beyond the power of earth. This is assuredly nothing less than that revelation of the Holy Spirit which we read in the pages of the New Testament. Then it is that we know and feel the presence of Him who is always present indeed within, but who chooses to veil Himself at ordinary times behind

the cloud of our ordinary thoughts. Then, if we have eyes to see the truth, shall we recognise that the voice which speaks to us is the voice of that Divine Person who has promised to guide all Christians. But yet once more. Not to recognise Him only at moments of spiritual upraising, but at all times and on all occasions; not to hear the tones of His voice only in moments of great trial, turning points of life, grievous falls, terrible temptations, but to be blessed by the constant sense of His presence: that is the aim of Christians in this world, that is the token which distinguishes the Saints of God, that is within the reach of every one of us. And with that what shall we compare?

May 27, 1866.

SERMON XXIII.

REJOICING IN DISTRESS.

2 CORINTHIANS xii. 10.

'*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in distresses for Christ's sake.*'

I DO not think it is difficult to any one to understand what St. Paul means by these words, or to enter into the feeling from which they come; but it is very difficult to attain to the same feeling one's self. Something of the sort, no doubt, runs all through life; but it is generally unconscious. When we begin to think of trouble, and pain, and disappointment, our highest reach is generally passive resignation. That resignation which finds a happiness in submitting to what comes because it comes from God is rare, and sometimes seems even impossible; and yet even that resignation St. Paul here professes to practise, and plainly wishes us to practise also.

Let us consider for a bit with what feeling we should meet pains, and disappointments, and annoyances, such as life always brings in abundance; let us consider how we can attain to that cheerfulness of spirit, that religious brightness, that merriment of the Christian spirit, that

unfailing buoyancy of heart which St. Paul calls joy, and which he demands of us just as much as he demands obedience. In spite of St. Paul's own saintliness of character, yet we know that even he found this not always easy. There were times when without were fightings and within were fears, when he had no rest in his spirit, when he had much affliction and anguish of heart, when he was perplexed, when he was cast down, when he was troubled, when he felt the thorn in the flesh and prayed that it might depart from him, and prayed in vain. Plainly enough, his joy in distress, and pain, and weakness, was not because he was of a cold and insensible nature; he felt, and felt very keenly; and his joy was not inconsistent with much anxiety, and many annoyances, and occasionally real unhappiness. And we too must not treat our own disappointments, or troubles, or distresses as if they were such trifles in comparison with his, that it is absurd to speak of them in the same sentence. They are often real enough to us; we are quite certain to meet with a good deal to give us pain and mortification and depression of spirits; and we must, if we are Christians, try to learn from the Apostle what is to be done with such burdens.

Of course, in the last resort we come to this, that all that happens is guided by a most loving Father, and therefore, whether we see it or not, it is quite certain that He has a wise and merciful purpose in everything. And when we are inclined to say that this is all true in the rough, but not, perhaps, in detail; true of the whole race of mankind, but not of every separate man in it; true if you take

in the whole range of history, but not if you look only at a single day; true if you are speaking of the working of the general rule, not true if you are thinking of individual applications; then come in our Lord's words, 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered; not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father:' or the words of St. Peter, 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you:' or the words of St. Paul, 'Be careful for nothing.' It may be that we cannot tell how it is possible to reconcile the regularity of God's government or the fixedness of His laws with any regard for individual happiness; but if you can trust our Lord and His Apostles, that which we cannot reconcile, He does; and while He governs the whole, He cares for every soul that lives. And we know that it must be so; for our own hearts instantly answer to the words, and we have an inward witness of their truth.

We can, however, go much further than an absolute trust. Absolute trust is a duty, no doubt; and it is the method of revelation always to reveal enough to justify our trust, but not enough to make trust needless. The revelation is always in harmony with our own knowledge, but it always outruns that knowledge; or otherwise it is plain that there would be no need of revelation. And so it is here; we cannot certainly so find out God's hand, as to be able to say, without any revelation either from within or without, that all things work together for good. Yet, on the other hand, we can see enough of that working to justify us in a readiness to accept a revelation which outsteps all knowledge.

Two things we can see; one of them lies on the surface, the other is more hidden, and yet not less certain.

What lies on the surface is that pain, and disappointment, and all kinds of sorrow are a part of our own discipline. We may grant at once that a great deal of suffering seems to our judgment to be wasted, to have no good effect on us; nay, it may even be, to be absolutely incapable of good effect. You may, perhaps, look back and see disappointments, injustices, unkindnesses, unlucky accidents, hardships, losses, which, so far as you see, did you no good; nay, perhaps did you downright harm. This thing hurt your temper; and that took the energy out of your work; and that made you distrustful; and that taught you that unselfishness brought double burdens on you; and that again seemed a terrible blow, with no possible use. Granted all this for the moment, though, as a general rule, if you look sharply, you will most often find that the blow did you harm because you did not try to make it do you good; yet, granted all this, you must, indeed, be hard of will if you cannot find instances where the pain has been of real use to you, has taught you what nothing else could have taught you, has softened you, or strengthened you, or raised you above yourself. Pain may sometimes seem useless, may even sometimes seem hurtful; but it undeniably very often does good, and does a kind of good which nothing else can do. For no other lesson-giver can put such force into his teaching. There are some lessons which this teacher compels us to learn from him whether we

will or no. There are many others which he alone can teach, but we need not learn unless we please. But no one does not need the teaching and need it often.

This, I say, lies on the surface. What is equally certain, but not so obvious, is, that all the very highest happiness is bound up with self-sacrifices which, taken in themselves, would be painful — perhaps inexpressibly painful. Nay, it may sometimes happen that what is really painful shall be turned into downright joy by the discovery that the pain has purchased what self-sacrifice only can purchase.

Begin with the lowest possible form of loss. Suppose that a man has lost a large part of his worldly goods; has been well-to-do, and has been reduced to poverty. Yet, if afterwards he were to find out that the direct consequence of his loss was to have unknowingly saved some very dear friend from exceeding unhappiness, would not the grief be turned to downright rejoicing? Would there not be many cases in which, not merely a very generous man, but any man with ordinary feelings, would be positively glad that the loss had befallen him when this was what it had purchased?

Or, again, to look at quite a different side of the matter, is it not undeniable that a kind of restraint seems in a strange sort of way to be absolutely required for all the truest enjoyment? We know that a little child is never happy when all control is taken from it: nothing is so tiresome to the child as unchartered liberty. But do not men and boys find the same thing? and while

all hearty enjoyment requires that there shall be a sense of liberty, do we not invariably find that we have made a mistake if we allow this liberty to go on into downright loss of self-control? Do we not require rules in our games, and measure in our indulgences, and a mixture of toil in our very recreations, and some demand on our energies in our times of permitted idleness? And does not all pleasure instantly begin to pall and disgust and weary, if we remove from it the sense of check, and self-mastery, and self-respect?

But go from the lowest to the highest, go from the pleasures of indulgence to the pleasures of affection, and observe how the height of all such pleasure is always founded on some sort of self-denial. You deny yourself to do your friend a kindness: is not your pleasure in his enjoyment heightened by your own self-sacrifice? It is not, observe, merely that you like him to be pleased; for if that were so, you would like it just as well if you had had nothing to do with procuring it. No, nor yet is it that you like him to know that it is your doing; that may come in, but need not; and moreover, in many cases, does not. For, surely, the highest of all pleasures is to do a kindness at your own cost, which no one shall ever know anything about.

Up to this point we can see. We can see that pain is a discipline. We can see that it is bound up with the highest kind of life, and even with the very happiness of that life. Then sight leaves us, and we are commanded to trust.

It may be that when all secrets are revealed, we shall

find that no pain that we have ever suffered, severe or slight, brief or lasting, has not either helped us to learn the lessons of God, or else been a blessing in some mysterious way, to those whom God hath redeemed. It may be that we shall find that our disappointments, our losses, our anxieties, have been the purchase-money of happiness to those whose happiness is more to us than our own. It may be that that which has been hardest to bear shall be most happiness to look back upon. It may be that our resignation to God's will shall prove a truer, a more valuable service, than all exertions that we have made, or could have made.

All these are speculations, possibilities, imaginations. But they are of use to us, if they make it easier to fall back on that absolute trust which is always sure that God, who does nothing in vain, will not allow our pain, whether it be much or little, to be wasted as a worthless thing, but will put it always to its use. So can we find a strong support whenever we are tempted to be discontented, or rebellious, or moody, or despondent; so can we say to ourselves, whenever anything thwarts us or grieves us, that God assuredly has a purpose in this, whether I can see it or not; and I will not let it cast me down, or stop my endeavours to serve Him. Our Lord, by pain, redeemed the world; by pain He ordained that men should be like Himself; pain He has blessed to be the servant of His highest work, to be the mysterious companion of our highest pleasures. And the little pain that He gives us to bear, so slight that when we think of it

we are inclined to feel ashamed to call it pain at all, we know that He gives in love, and we will bear it as a token that He has not forgotten us, and it shall only help us to come nearer to Himself.

June 3, 1866.

SERMON XXIV.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

ST. LUKE xiv. 24.

'*For I say unto you, That none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.*'

THE teaching of the New Testament almost, it may be said, throughout, is gathered up into points. That which in practice very often occupies much time is often spoken of as if it took place in a moment. Rules which are applicable and are meant to be applied to everyday life, are illustrated by instances taken from important epochs. Instead of a steady growth we have a decisive change; instead of alternations of defeat and success we have a victory once for all; instead of a series of trials we have one great peril. Thus, for instance, every one knows that the ordinary Christian life is not often marked by such a change as is described by St. Paul in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Very few men go through the conflict which he there describes, and are thenceforth free from all similar conflicts. Most men find that their own lives have very little

that approaches his description in intensity; but, on the other hand, most men also find that the struggle, in a much fainter form, is repeated within them again and again. So, again, there are not, perhaps, many who find in themselves the likeness of the Prodigal Son's profligate life, nor of his depth of penitence. But many men will find copies, both of the sin and of the repentance, faintly traced, but often repeated. Not once only, but many times, do we find the pearl of great price. Not once only, but many times, do we find the hidden treasure. But as our finding needs often to be repeated, because it is, alas! an imperfect finding; so, too, our appreciation of what we find is not at first, no, nor generally till many times the opportunity has come before us, such as to be compared with that final decisive selling of all that we have in order to buy that pearl or that treasure.

This was inevitable. The New Testament was written when men were not Christians already from infancy, but had to be made Christians in manhood. It was written in the heat and glow of the greatest of all religious revolutions. Men lived fast and men learnt fast at such a time. They made sudden changes, but the changes, though sudden, were deep and permanent. Many who now are Christians would in those days probably never have been Christians at all. They could never have passed through the fiery furnace which blocked up the entrance to the kingdom of heaven. But, on the other hand, there were few half-Christians then, and there are, and there must be, many now. And each time must find a spiritual life suited to its own needs.

Now my object in putting you in mind of all this, which is obvious enough, is to apply it to the interpretation of our Lord's parables. For in these parables we perpetually find that the form of the parable belongs to those days, but the principle of the parable belongs to these days quite as much as to those. Our Lord seems ever to speak of a great crisis in life; but the principle which he applies to that crisis will be found quite as applicable to ordinary times, when there is nothing that we can call a crisis. The seed is not sown once only; the sheep is not sought once only; nor once only is the lost piece of money recovered, nor the prodigal son welcomed; nor the treasure nor the pearl found; nor is it only at the last day that the sheep are divided from the goats, the wise virgins separated from the foolish, the industrious servant rewarded and the idle punished, the labourers in the vineyard paid equal wages for unequal labour. In all these cases the principle of the parable is as applicable to little things as to great, to daily life as to moments of great decision. And if we do not see this we lose much of what our Lord meant us to learn. In fact, the laws of God's spiritual kingdom are like the laws of His natural kingdom. It is the same law of attraction which rolls the earth in its orbit and makes a grain of dust fall to the ground; the same law of life which keeps an oak alive for a century and a mushroom for a couple of days; the same law of expansion which lifts the lid of a tea-kettle and shakes a continent with an earthquake. So, too, is it the same law of holiness and goodness and justice which rules the judgment that shall be passed on a smile or a gesture, and

'that which shall decide on the results of a life. 'De minimis non curat lex' is true of human laws, it is not true of divine.

In the parable of the Great Supper, which was read in the Gospel this morning, we see the rule which shall determine who are to come and who are not. It is to be, as God's rules, so far as we know them, almost always are, for the most part a self-acting rule. Men may perhaps be excluded who are willing to come, as we find in our version of the parable was the case of the men who had not on a wedding garment. But for the most part men are excluded because when the invitation actually comes they are not willing to obey it. They turn away, not because there is no room for them, but because they like something else better. This conception of the Great Feast must have sounded very strange to those who heard the parable. That men should be excluded for unfitness would have been nothing new. That men should refuse because the supper was not attractive was a new conception, such as we find in no Prophet's warnings. Nay, even we, who are Christians, constantly find it hard to realise this to ourselves. I will take an instance to show it. We constantly find men making a difficulty out of our Lord's declaration that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But in most cases the difficulty arises from supposing that our Lord means that rich men will be refused admission; whereas our Lord plainly means, and the context shows it precisely, what He means in this parable, not that the rich will be refused

admission, but that they will be unwilling to come. Now why is it difficult to us to represent to ourselves this unwillingness? Because we always think of the Great Supper simply as so much unmeasured happiness, so much unmixed delight. It will be happiness, it will be delight, but only to those who can appreciate it; not to the base, not to the selfish, not to the false, not to the weak, not to the impure. It will be the highest happiness of which human nature is capable; but it can only be tasted by those who are of kindred nature to Him who gives it. Those who would not come when they were invited would not have found it a happiness if they had come.

Now this, the very principle of the parable, is just as applicable to our daily life as it is to any such critical moment as the parable supposes. We are invited to a spiritual feast; to a feast of that happiness which is got from perfect self-mastery, from peace with our consciences, from having no cloud between us and those whom we love, from having no cloud between us and God. We know perfectly well that this is a very real happiness. We have had foretastes of it now and then, quite enough to show what it is like. There are other enjoyments more exciting. There are pleasures that seem for the time more entirely to transport us out of ourselves, especially in the warmth of youth. But there is nothing, after all, equal to the sunshine within, to the buoyancy, to the cheerfulness, which comes from having no weight on the conscience, from being afraid of no detection, from seeing no unpleased face among our friends, from feeling that God's love is not shut out from

our hearts. The pleasure which forgets duty has to be purchased by a dead weight of bitter thoughts never quite forgotten, by frequent fears, by the depressing gloom that clouds loving faces. There can be no real doubt which is happiest, the pleasure to which God invites, or the pleasure on which He frowns. We know this, I say. And yet not only every year, but every day of our lives, nay, sometimes many times in one day, the invitation comes:—Come to this duty which will be a real pleasure when it is once well done; come to this act of self-denial which will tenfold repay itself in the very doing; come to this conquest of your temper which will make you feel a real peace when you have achieved it; come to this kindness which will make your very soul warm to its duty; or come away from temptation, and you will feel the delight of knowing that God is with you. But every time the invitation is given there is the temptation (and how often do we yield to the temptation) to say, 'Not just now. I quite mean to seek that Great Supper; but not this time. I must attend to this or to that. It would be unkind to my friend to leave him alone to go to my work;' or, 'I cannot deny myself in this, I will find other opportunities;' or, 'This is really too bad; I can keep my temper generally, but there are limits to human endurance;' or, 'I must go into temptation this once; I do not mean to do it often.' What are all the excuses that flash through the mind at such moments but repetitions of the old pleas: 'I have bought a yoke of oxen;' 'I have bought a piece of ground;' 'I have married a wife.'

But this duty, which thus seems ever to pursue us and give us no rest, it is so exacting, it is so dull, it is so unrewarded; what wonder that we turn away? No, indeed it is not. There are those who find it so; those, namely, who refuse the invitation, and go to this and to that; and then—not in repentence, but in sullen acquiescence; not because their hearts are touched, but because they fear consequences, and because they are disgusted with the pleasure which they have preferred to duty—come back, like Balaam, to obey in deed but not in spirit. Such men learn what is meant by the words 'None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.' To them the supper is no supper at all. To them who obey in an unloving, discontented, sulky mood there is indeed no happiness in obedience. They obey, and find no peace in obedience. They deny themselves for the sake of others, and instead of loving those whom they thus benefit all the more, they love them all the less. They conquer the outburst of temper, and substitute an inward brooding of ill-will. They resist temptation, and feel a kind of resentment against Providence for having put this hard task upon them. They come, but they do not taste the supper, for they refused it.

But it is a real pleasure, a pleasure above all other pleasures, to those who come heartily and gladly, who make the needful sacrifice with a ready spirit and with a resolute cheerfulness, forcing away from their minds all gloomy suggestions and all discontented feelings, recognising in the trifle which calls them as sure a summons from the Great King as if it had been the royal

messenger Death; seeing in each invitation to Christian effort a call, not to pain, but to joy, not to a task, but to a supper, not to a loss, but to a service in the King's court. The true feast of the Christian is the communion with God and with Christ; a communion which the soul enjoys in fuller and ever fuller measure as we more entirely transform ourselves by the renewing of the mind; a communion which at last leavens at once the character and the life, so that there is no pleasure equal to that of feeling that God is with us, and no occasion, no accident, hardly even any misfortune, which does not strengthen that feeling.

June 10, 1866.

SERMON XXV.

THE SPIRITS OF PROPHETS SUBJECT TO THE PROPHETS.

1 CORINTHIANS xiv. 32.

'*And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.*'

I DO not know any words in the Bible which express with more emphatic precision than these the great Christian principle that a servant of Christ must be master of his own impulses. Let us consider the context in which we find them. The Church of Corinth, to which the Epistle was sent, abounded in spiritual gifts. They seem from the Apostle's language to have been distinguished above other churches in what was striking. They abounded in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in diligence, in demonstration of affection. When they came together every one was full, was possessed with something that he longed to bring out; every one had a psalm, had a doctrine, had a tongue, had a revelation, had an interpretation. What a picture the words give us of a body of men full of eagerness and life; almost carried away with the flood of their own thoughts; unable to rest till they had communicated what had struck them! When each was in such haste to say what he

had got in his mind, when all were talking and none were listening, how easy it would be for no result to come of it but mere confusion. And this was the very result that seemed likely to come, and they were obliged to appeal to St. Paul and ask him to lay down some rules for precedence in the use of these gifts. Accordingly, he gives his rules in the three chapters, the 12th, 13th, and 14th, of which this from which I am now quoting is the last. And his rules are all based on the principle of spiritual utility. Those who had the gift of tongues seem to have claimed a sort of superiority over the others, and it is not difficult to see why. For among all the gifts it was the most unique, and the most peculiarly Christian; it was the first outward mark of the Spirit that was given at all; it was for some time the special mark, so that in the Acts of the Apostles to receive the Holy Ghost and to speak with tongues, are almost used as convertible terms. The pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost had been marked by this gift of tongues. Cornelius and his household had been at once admitted to baptism because they spake with tongues. It was a noted mark of St. Paul himself that he spake with tongues more than all his converts. Moreover, there is no trace of anything of the same kind elsewhere. No heathen writer, no Jewish writer, ever mentions such a gift. There were among the heathen and among the unconverted Jews men who claimed to work every miracle, men who claimed to possess every other gift that Christians could show, but not this. St. Paul, however, decisively puts this gift not first but last. It is not

the most useful; it is the least useful, and the gift of prophesying, the gift of interpreting, the gift of healing, are all placed above it in spite of its strange unearthly character. And yet above all these is put the commonplace gift of charity, which looks as if it were hardly a gift in the same sense at all, being open to every Christian, in a certain measure indispensable to every Christian, and having nothing in it that looked miraculous in the slightest degree. And when he comes to speak of the two gifts that were specially matched against each other because they would be just the two that would come into collision, namely, the gift of tongues and the gift of prophesying, he puts the gift of prophesying first, and gives his reasons at full length, namely, that the gift of prophesying is the more useful of the two.

It is obvious, however, that those who thought so highly of the gift of tongues would be just the people to lean (as, perhaps, we are all of us tempted to lean,) to the belief that it is a mark of unearthliness in a gift if it is uncontrollable. It seems more miraculous to be so possessed by the spirit as to have no longer any power over your actions. It seems as if it were less your work and more God's work if you were passive and were carried this way and that by a power which mastered your will. And so there would be a strong temptation to plead that the Apostle's directions to observe a certain order and regularity in the public preaching and the prayers were all right and fitting as long as they *could* be obeyed. The speaker with tongues would say, 'I submit

as long as I can; I will hold my peace as long as the power of the spirit does not overpower me.' The prophesier would say, 'I wait for my turn as long as God permits me. I do not interrupt any one else as long as the spirit allows me to guide myself.' But both would be inclined to say, 'A moment comes every now and then when I cannot hold in; I am clean carried away; I lose my own self-control altogether; it is the spirit that speaks and not myself.' To all this the Apostle's reply is full, and not to be evaded, 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.'

See the full meaning of this. The Spirit of God is given in various ways, whether miraculous or not miraculous, to inspire you, to touch you, to move you, to enlighten you; but not to take from you either the mastery of your life or the responsibility for it. And any spirit which professes to do that is not from God. Loss of self-control is never Christian; never under any circumstances. God never deals so with Christians. He never overpowers the will. He always works in it and through it; He never forces it. Obey Him, and His power will give you a strength not your own. Disobey Him, and He will bid your conscience warn you, check you, reprove you, sting you: but He will never take your life clean out of your hands so that you shall not be responsible for it any longer.

There have been often periods in the Christian Church when men, sometimes in one country, sometimes in another, have professed to be carried away by a spiritual power which simply mastered them, and which they could

do nothing with. And as God can bring good out of evil, it may often have happened that men have been so stirred by such sights and such apparently unearthly power that they have been roused to better lives. But for all that the loss of self-control, wherever and however it is caused, is in itself wrong, and not the work of God. On the contrary, the more truly a Christian is filled with God's Spirit, the more he is master of his own conduct. The strong impulses that he feels, the flashes of new light that he sees, are sent, not to use him at their pleasure, but for him to use them in God's service. If a man lets himself be carried away—I do not at all mean that it is always an evil thing which carries him away; it may be in itself a very good thing; but most assuredly, so far as he allows himself to be a mere passive instrument, so far is he making a bad use of that which God has sent.

What, then, are we to think of the strong impulses that have made men martyrs to thankless labour, preachers in sinks of vice, missionaries to barbarous savages? There must have been in them surely some uncontrollable force, or they could not have been so carried away from all the routine of ordinary life. Yes, there must have been no doubt a divine force, but not, therefore, an uncontrollable. The sacrifice of these men has not been made with eyes closed in obedience to a compulsion that left them no choice. No, all the noblest of them have gone to their appointed task with full purpose of will, with full deliberation on the rules of duty, with clear perception that this was the work which God

meant them to do, with the full consent of their own will to do it. They counted the cost, they looked into the law of duty, they examined and compared the calls upon them, before they decided what it was that God would have them to do. And they were, and nothing could prevent them from being, responsible for their decision. Not even the possession of direct inspiration from God would justify the prophet in saying that he could not help himself, that he was not master of his spirit. To him the Apostle would say, 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.' And still more to all lower degrees of inspiration, still more to all strong impulses, longings to devote the life to some particular service, impulses to set right what is wrong around us, impulses to break away from ordinary rules and customs; to all these the same rule applies. The impulse may be good, and you may be right in following it, and if so, you will find it strengthen you when you do so. But, nevertheless, you, and not it, will be responsible for following it or for not following it. You, and not it, are the master. You, and not it, are to decide whether it be good to agree to it or not.

And the negative form of this principle is just as true as the positive. It will not be permitted you to plead that you were waiting for an inspiration, for a heavenly impulse, for some inward stir before beginning to obey God. You are responsible for yourself if a spirit seizes on your soul and fills you with strong inclinations, and moves you even to passion. So, too, you are responsible if you find no inward movement, nothing to stir you,

nothing to give you new life, a new light. You are not to wait till God does for you what you ought to do for yourself. You are not to stand still and say, 'I will come when I am called: but now I feel no call.' You are not to lie down by the roadside, refusing to run the race, till some one stronger than yourself shall pick you up and carry you. If a power were to stir your heart, you would be notwithstanding required to keep the mastery of your life, and you would be responsible for what you did with it. And if you are not stirred you are still responsible, and are still required to obey your Master in heaven.

It is needful to remind ourselves of all this every now and then. It is needful to compel ourselves to remember that God has not made us free spiritual beings for nothing, and that He means us to use this will of ours in His service, and that He will hold us responsible for the use of it. It is needful to remind ourselves that no accident, no interference, not even from Heaven itself, will take this responsibility away, or allow us to plead about anything that we have done, 'I could not help it.'

And yet I cannot leave this subject without saying what is, of course, included in it, but is as it were the necessary counterpart, that as God requires us to work out our own salvation, so is it He that worketh in us both to will and to do. Try to obey Him, and you cannot go too far in counting on His aid. Never mind that you feel weak, and utterly unable to face your duty; never mind that you have often failed before and have lost all confidence in yourself; never mind that this will of yours on which so much depends vacillates and

hesitates and flinches, and seems at the mercy of every fluctuation of feeling, of every allurement of temptation; never mind that you seem to have no choice left but to try no longer, but rather say to God in despair, 'Do thou carry me, for I cannot walk.' If you will but rise at the call of God you will find that the weaker you feel the stronger you are, and the more you lean on God the more upright and unbending will your purpose be, and the more you fear your own feebleness the more victories you will win, and the more you constantly turn to your Father, the more sure will be your perpetual approach to Him. Only, whatever you do, do not let yourself lie still and make no effort, for that and that alone is the beginning of spiritual death.

June 17, 1866.

SERMON XXVI.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

ST. JOHN iii. 26—30.

'*And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST was the last and the greatest of the prophets, and on him accordingly was laid the heaviest burden of all. With the exception perhaps of Samuel, every prophet before had hoped, and had been justified in hoping, that his successor would carry on still further the work which he had begun. Each prophet took up what former prophets had said, pressed it on to new conclusions, illustrated it with new applications, added to it new details. Each prophet took up what his immediate predecessor had done, worked it out to its full results, fulfilled its anticipations, added to it the

preparation for yet further growth. So Elisha works out the inspired plans of Elijah. So Micah supports Isaiah. So Jeremiah repeats with more terrible emphasis the warnings of Micah. So Daniel understood by books, we are told, that the time was come for the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah. So much, indeed, do the prophets run as it were in one groove, so entirely are they employed in the same kind of service, that they catch up each other's phrases, and if any one of them uses an expression of peculiar significance—a figure, a type, a proverb—it is repeated from one to the other till its echoes are caught at last in the New Testament and in the Church. The *dies illa* of the Middle Ages begins with Joel and Amos, is caught by Jeremiah, by Ezekiel, by our Lord, until the very ring of the words conveys a meaning to the student of the Bible far beyond their literal force. Hosea compares the Israelite Church to a wife, and her apostasy to adultery, and the figure is never lost again till our Lord teaches His Apostles, and through them all believers, the beautiful figure of the bride of Christ. The grand idea of the Messiah, dimly hinted at in Amos and perhaps in Hosea, more clearly conceived by Micah, rises to its height in Isaiah, and is never again forgotten. All these men had a past, but also had a future, and a future of a kindred nature to their own minds. There was nothing to warn them that the Messiah, when He really came, would be quite unlike all their preconceptions. There was nothing to teach them that all their inspiration would be one day absorbed in something far higher but also far different. There was nothing to tell them that much which they thought of the highest importance

would one day be set aside as having fulfilled its appointed end and therefore useless. They had their trials no doubt. The people often doubted their mission, and Jeremiah barely escaped with life for blaspheming the Temple. Men, too, who professed to be prophets equally with themselves thwarted their teaching, contradicted their predictions, denied their inspiration. But, at any rate, no one of them had the trial of finding that a prophet equal to if not greater than himself, one whom he in his conscience could not deny to be a prophet sent by God, yet lived a different life, taught on a wholly different system, seemed in fact to be undoing very much of what he had been labouring to do.

Samuel had something like the same trial, but so far less heavy to bear that the comparison only makes the contrast still more striking. Samuel, like John the Baptist, stood between two systems. He belonged to the one and had to prepare for the other. He belonged to the republic and he had to prepare for the monarchy. And evidently he found it hard. But he, nevertheless, had not to acknowledge that what was coming was better than what was going. He had not to confess that he was superseded by something which was more excellent but whose excellence was not his. He had not to feel that his work was a preparation for something so totally different that it might almost seem no preparation at all.

This was the trial of John the Baptist. He came, as we are told, neither eating nor drinking; an austere prophet of the old severe system; an observer of the law; nay, finding no other escape from the temptations and softnesses and weaknesses of this mortal state than in an asceticism

even severer than the law; passing his time in the deserts; with no clothing but a single garment of camel's hair, like his prototype Elijah; with no food but the insects and wild honey that he could find for himself in the uninhabited wilderness; giving up, in short, all this world and all that this world could give; teaching his disciples to fast and teaching them to pray; and having very short simple lessons for all others—no other lessons, indeed, than a stern reminder of the most elementary duties, since the new kingdom was now at hand.

He finds himself superseded by one whom he knows to be far above him, though he seems not to know how far; one whose superiority he had felt long before, but who was marked by a miraculous sign at Baptism as the very fulfilment of all the highest prophetic hopes: but who practises none of his austerities; lives in the society of His fellow-creatures and accepts invitations; never teaches His disciples to fast; does not even regularly teach them to pray, until they ask Him; fearlessly mixes with publicans and sinners; is totally unlike all other religious men of the time; and yet compels all who approach Him to feel that His life is the one true type of the highest religion.

Assuredly it was not a slight trial to John the Baptist to acknowledge that he was to decrease while his Successor was to increase; that all his strictness and rigidity of observance, all his self-denial, all that had cost him most to give, was, after all, though very high, yet not the highest; that what seemed an easy, unrestrained, joyous life, was higher than all his self-restraint, and that his preaching was to prepare the way for one so unlike himself that malicious tongues were able to speak of him as a gluttonous

man and a winebibber. It is often not so difficult to acknowledge superior excellence of your own kind; if you are liberal, to acknowledge superior generosity; if you are unselfish, to see the beauty of unselfishness; if you are chaste, to see the beauty of heavenly purity. It is often, also, not difficult to acknowledge good to which we cannot attain but which our own conscience has already had eyes to see; and so men who are hot-tempered will acknowledge that it is good to control the temper; and men who long to be just can admire a justice to which they have not yet attained themselves; and men who often slip away from truth may yet have the deepest inward admiration of truth. But it is not so easy to acknowledge that to be good which flatly contradicts your own ideal of life: to be so humble that even while you are obeying your conscience you acknowledge that you are not infallible, and that there may be a higher right than any you have yet seen: that what seems to you positively wrong may yet perhaps some day be done in such a spirit as to be not only right, but a more excellent right, than that to which you have attained yourself. We may be sure that the life of austerity to which John the Baptist had devoted himself was the highest that he could think of. And, no doubt, it would always have been easy for him to avow that all men were not called upon to live by such a rule, and that those who had not been called to it need not adopt it. That men are ready to acknowledge in most cases. But to confess that the easier life might be filled with such a spirit as to be really higher, nobler, more heavenly than the other, this it is hard for such a man to see.

But there is no trace anywhere in John the Baptist's life of the slightest impulse of envy or jealousy. How completely he belonged to the older system is shown by the fact, always a startling one to those who reflect on it, that he never became one of our Lord's disciples. Our Lord never called him: and he never offered to come. One would assuredly have expected it to have been otherwise. One would have expected the greatest of the one system to have been one of the first to enter the other. One would have thought that assuredly no other would be so ready to learn from Christ as he who had spent his time in getting others ready to learn. But no; he remains outside; so emphatically does he belong to the old system and not to the new, that all the disciples of the new kingdom are expressly contrasted with him, and set above him; the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

But though he is thus as it were left outside, such is his humility that so far from envying he rejoices. He cannot join the new body. He has been formed in a different mould. He has set his life running in different grooves. He has learnt to listen to a different language. But what he cannot enter into he can acknowledge to be superior. He can rejoice at seeing the success of a doctrine which he did not teach, of a system more heavenly than his own, of a Teacher rising above him by a superiority not of degree only, but of nature. Whether, when he sent his disciples to ask our Lord whether He were He that should come, he wished for something to set his own doubts at rest, or whether he

wished to give some aid to his wavering disciples, we cannot tell. But these doubts show plainly enough the temptations that must have assailed men belonging to John the Baptist's system. And if he felt no such doubts himself, it must have been because his humility and the generosity which always belongs to humility had been too strong for them and had set them at rest.

John the Baptist's self-denial is a lesson to Christians, for he, like many other saints of God, gave up everything to serve the Lord, and persevered fasting unto the end. John the Baptist's courage is still more a lesson for Christians, for he was commissioned to tell the truth first to the people, then to the Pharisees and to the Jewish authorities, finally to Herod the King, and he did the duty even unto death. And here I say he is still more emphatically a lesson, because such lessons are rare; not so many are thus commissioned to rebuke vice, and not so many have this opportunity given them of showing their loyalty to their true Master. And yet, though not so many are thus commissioned, all, or almost all, have similar duties often put on them, without any danger generally, with no difficulty that can be compared with his, and yet not without temptation to flinch. But above all is John the Baptist the example of that peculiar but most excellent humility which obeys conscience with absolute submission, and yet acknowledges that conscience is but the messenger of one higher than itself, and is ready ever to see that still more excellent thing which God may see fit to reveal.

June 24, 1866.

SERMON XXVII.

SEVERITY BEFORE MERCY.

AMOS ii. 1.

'*For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.*'

THE prophecy of Amos marks distinctly a change in the tone of religious men, which had been no doubt growing for some time, but was by his time become clear and undeniable. One of the most startling characteristics of the early prophets, of Moses, of Joshua, of Samuel, of David, is their terrible severity. In the legislation of Moses, death is the punishment not only for idolatry or blasphemy, but even for breach of observance of the Sabbath. A man is stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. So Joshua puts Achan to death in the valley of Achor for having taken some of the spoil of Jericho and concealed it, after it had been solemnly ordered to be all destroyed. So the Canaanites are destroyed with the most ruthless severity, and if they are spared it is out of weakness, not out of mercy. So

Samuel requires Saul utterly to destroy the Amalekites; and when Saul, contrary to these orders, had spared Agag, the prophet will not permit one who had been notorious for his slaughters to escape the punishment, but he hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord, with the words, 'As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.' So, again, when David had conquered the Ammonites, 'he put the people under saws and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln;' when he conquered Moab 'he measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive;' when he conquered Edom, for six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, till he had cut off every male in Edom. There are, meanwhile, many precepts enjoining mercy, kindness, gentleness; at this very time oppression, unjust severity, cruelty, are imperatively forbidden. The people were not allowed to vex a stranger, nor to take usury from the poor, nor to seethe the kid in its mother's milk, nor to allow the ass of him that hated them to lie helpless under a burden. The severity was reserved for enemies conquered in war and for criminals convicted of crime. But against these all severity seems to be allowed; and not only allowed, very often positively commanded.

We know that this is not the teaching of the Gospel. The revelation of the Old Testament, we are taught over and over again, was an imperfect revelation. Something was reserved for us that they, without us, might not be made perfect. And in one remarkable case our Lord not

only states this, but He states the reason. Certain things were inserted in the law of Moses for the hardness of the hearts of those who were to live under that law. In fact, the law was adapted to those to whom it was given. It was an imperfect state of society, and a perfect revelation would have done them harm instead of good, and therefore an imperfect revelation was given, till, in course of time, they should be ready for a more perfect one.

Now, I say that this prophecy of Amos is the first thing that distinctly marks the change in the character of the people's feelings, and the corresponding change in the character of the teaching that was given to them. Cruelty, even to enemies, is here especially denounced. Nation after nation is threatened with punishment for cruelty, and for cruelty to enemies in war. Damascus, for cruelty to Gilead; Gaza, for carrying off slaves and selling them to Edom; Tyre, for doing the same thing in spite of the brotherly covenant which had been made with David and Solomon; Edom, for pursuing his brother with the sword, and keeping his wrath for ever; Ammon, for his horrible cruelty in the endeavour to increase his territory; and lastly, Moab, for his treatment of the king of Edom. And among them all, this last is in one respect the most striking, for all the others are instances of cruelty practised on the Israelites, and the denunciation might therefore be considered as a declaration that God would take the part of His own chosen people, and would visit with special punishment any evil done to them. But neither Edom nor Moab had any such special claim. Edom, in fact, was one of the criminals denounced. So that it is

plain that the sin here denounced is the cruelty, and that alone.

And this falls in with the history. The bloody revolution of Jehu was the last instance of anything that can be compared to the old severity in the service of God. And the very narrative of this in some way conveys the impression that Jehu was no longer obeying his own conscience and giving way to a fiery zeal, but was pursuing a policy which had a double aim. His severity is distinctly not approved. His abolition of idolatry was right, but the means he used for the purpose were wrong. And, accordingly, Hosea declares in the name of God, 'Yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.' This blood of Jezreel had been shed, to all outer appearance, to further the cause of truth. It might seem as little to be condemned as the execution of Agag by Samuel. But no. God will no longer accept that kind of service. The chosen people are beginning to learn a new and higher lesson. And if they can learn it, they must; for it is not God's will that those who are capable of the higher knowledge should remain content with the lower.

It is often said that the natural feeling on reading of that old sternness should be one of thankfulness that God hath given us the blessing of a more heavenly teaching; and no doubt that feeling will come instantly to the heart of any Christian as he studies these strange histories. But I think it natural to ask why this was so; why, if the lessons of God were to be gradual, severity came at the beginning, mercy and gentleness at the end; why,

amongst all that men had to learn, the longsuffering of God with sinners, His inexhaustible mercy, His tenderness, which it seems not even sin can shut up, should be concealed at first behind this awful sternness; why His earlier prophets should have been so stern, so unrelenting, so terrible; why His earlier law should have been so strict, so unlike the Gospel, so unlike the fuller revelation of His nature. Is not the answer this?

There are two aspects of mercy. There is the mercy which rests on weakness, on a mere unwillingness to punish, on a want of all deep sense of the eternal difference between good and evil. There is a mercy which rests on love, on a longing desire to save, on a wish to light up the erring soul to innocence and strength, on a desire to purify, to ennoble, to sanctify. And these two are very different. Now it is the natural temptation of human weakness to look for the first kind of mercy, not for the second. It is our natural temptation to think of God's love as an unwillingness to inflict pain, as a tenderness too great to allow us to suffer, as a gentleness which forgets the past and does not foresee the future, but only desires to spare the present. And so in all our sins our inclination is to desire not so much that we may be purified, that our sin may be burnt out of us if we cannot get rid of it in any other way, that our natures may be lifted above it, that we may rise to a higher level, that we may be cleansed and purged, and brought nearer to God; but rather that we may be spared the consequences, that we may not suffer the pain that our sin threatens to bring on us, that we may be forgiven as it were without being

cleansed, that the sin may be as it were forgotten among the things of the past, and nothing more may come of it. Now I am not blaming this weakness as if it were in itself something worse than weakness. But assuredly it is not the highest conception of the mercy of God, and to make it impossible that we should rest in this, God allows His revelation to commence with severity, though it is to end in gentleness. You must begin, if you are to learn from the Bible, you must begin with the thought that God's eyes cannot behold what is wrong. He cannot permit evil. He cannot allow you His servant to retain evil in your heart. Whatever else may be, that cannot be. The first, the fundamental conception of God's nature is not His mercy, but His holiness. Mercy shall stand high, but holiness shall stand first, for indeed it is His holiness that gives the character to His mercy. Before you learn anything else about Him, learn that nothing, no suffering on your part, no severity on His part, shall be counted too much if it be needed to enforce His righteous law. Human nature must learn, at the cost of whatever pain is necessary, that He will not tolerate evil. This is undeniably the conception of His nature that we derive from studying the Bible as a whole. We get the idea of a Father who desires our happiness, who loves us, who watches over us, who surrounds us with innumerable blessings; but who never allows anything else to stand above the absolute necessity of our doing what is right.

When once that lesson has been learned, then there is absolutely no limit to the tenderness of His mercy. When once we understand that His mercy is not to spare us

from punishment, but to bring us back to Himself; not to save us from needful pain, but to fill our souls with the one true source of happiness, the presence of His own Spirit; not to forgive us and leave us where we are, but to raise us up to heaven, and forgive us in doing so; then we may safely allow our minds to dwell on His mercy as absolutely boundless. We were lost sinners, and Christ came to restore us; we were enemies, and Christ came to reconcile us; we were helpless captives, and Christ gave His life to buy us out of prison; we were ruined past redemption, but Christ's love was without limit. The gentleness of the New Testament is inexhaustible to those who have learned what is meant by the severity of the Old.

And when this is set before us we recognise it, even if we did not know it before. Even when we long to be spared the punishment of our sins, even when in the weakness of our humanity we desire to have our past sins forgotten and buried, and nothing more, we know that this cannot really satisfy our true need. We know that deep within there is the longing for something more, and that we should never be truly content if our past sins were simply passed over and our nature was left just what it was before, no better, no purer, no nobler, no truer. We cannot be happy in receiving such a mercy as this. We may, indeed, fall into such a torpor of sloth as to make no effort to rise above ourselves. But nevertheless we are not, we cannot be, content with it. The uneasy sense of unworthiness, the secret feeling that all is not what it should be, the silent whispers of conscience

in solitary moments, force us to know, even if we will not confess, that God's mercy follows and does not precede His holiness, and that it is better, far better, that it should be so.

For indeed it is quite possible to relax the earnestness of the will, and to lower the whole tone of the spiritual powers, if we allow the thought to prevail within that God is merciful and nothing else, and that His mercy will not punish, not even for our own good. Even if we cannot, as I do not believe that at bottom we really can, but even if we cannot rest in this conception of God's love, yet to indulge in such false thoughts of Him does us harm. The Christian will rather cherish the thought, that above all things does God desire that men's souls shall be lifted to Himself; and therefore the first hope, the first wish of the penitent Christian always will be, not how he can be spared punishment, but how he can be cleansed, restored, renewed, loved. Welcome any pain that shall help this end. Welcome any severity that shall work out this result. Welcome whatever God shall send, if it bring this to pass. For to be more purified from evil, to be more entirely accepted by Christ, to be more freed from sin and sinful impulses, to be more fitted for heavenly service, that is the hope which the Christian learns from the revelation of God in the Bible; and in the fulfilment of that hope he knows that God will not fail him.

September 23, 1866.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE LADDER OF PERFECTION.

ST. MATTHEW v. 4, 6.

'*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*'

I HAVE taken occasion more than once to point out what is the order in which our Lord has arranged the seven blessings with which He begins the Sermon on the Mount. First come the poor in spirit—that is, those who possess that humility, without which no one shall even enter the Kingdom of Heaven; those who are poor in spirit; those who humble themselves as little children; those who are willing to learn, willing to be led, willing to depend entirely on strength outside themselves, willing to trust, like little children; they and they only shall come into the Kingdom of Heaven, for the kingdom is theirs. But to enter is not enough. Even after you are in you have much to learn, much to practise, much to do with yourself. So there are set before you on one side the inner life, what you are to be in yourself; on the other side the outer life, what you

are to be in your dealing with others. Blessed are they that mourn; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are the pure in heart: that is the inner life. Blessed are the meek; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the peacemakers: that is the outer life. And it is plain enough that the order in each life is not without a meaning. The lower character and the lower blessing come first; the higher character and the higher blessing come afterwards. It is more excellent to be merciful than to be meek; more excellent to be peacemakers than even to be merciful. And so, again, it is more excellent to hunger and thirst after righteousness than to mourn; and more excellent to be pure in heart than to hunger and thirst after righteousness. And for the highest excellence is reserved the highest blessing, for there cannot be any blessing to reach above seeing God and being His children.

But though there is, and evidently there is meant to be, this progression, this ascent upwards both in the characters that are blessed, and in the blessings that are given, yet it is not meant that we are to be perfect in the lower character before we proceed to the higher. Far otherwise. For indeed, the very first of all is humility; but if we waited till we were perfect in humility before we attempted to rise to that which stands next above it, we should wait all our lives. A certain measure of humility is the condition of being a Christian at all: perfect humility is the crown of Christian perfectness.

So then it is true that mourning for sin stands on a lower level than hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

But for all that we are not to wait till our sorrow for our faults shall be in some way commensurate with the evil of them before we endeavour to rise above faults altogether, and to render positive service.

To some extent, however, these two stages in the ladder of Christian perfection correspond to two different kinds of character in men. There are men who are naturally disposed, with God's help, to rise as high as genuine sorrow for their faults, but do not without much effort get beyond that. There are men who are disposed to press eagerly onwards, and not to give due weight to the need of repentance. And no doubt, by God's grace, there are men who combine both; who are sincerely penitent, and yet do not allow penitence to swallow up all their lives; who grieve for the past and yet struggle onwards, rendering active service, devoting themselves with hearty self-abandonment to God's will, trying to learn something more than the evil of sin, namely, the beauty of holiness.

To mourn over faults and to fight against them is not only right, it is indispensable. But some men's lives are quite filled with this. Such men are in some degree a burden both to themselves and others on this account. They are tempted to brood over faults with a melancholy miserable sorrow, with a sorrow which it is difficult to comfort. They have a much keener sense of the wrong of doing wrong than the necessity of doing right. They have much more fear of evil than love of good. They hate to be selfish; but they have no pleasure in self-sacrifice; perhaps they feel afraid to allow such pleasure,

lest it should be a pleasure in their own good deeds. They hate to be unjust; but they have no positive delight in justice. They hate disobedience; but their obedience is too anxious, too disturbed by fears that they are not obedient enough, to be hearty and cheerful. Moreover, they go the wrong way to cure many of their faults, and therefore double their own failures. For many faults are best cured, some can only be cured, by hearty enthusiasm in duty. Evil thoughts, for instance, can rarely be cured by thinking; they must be cured by genuine hard work. Discontent can rarely be cured by mere fighting with it; it generally needs some bit of genuine self-denial to drive it out. There is a good deal of evil that you cannot get rid of by sweeping it out; you must fill up its place. Now, these of whom I speak do not perceive this, and so they fight an unhappy melancholy painful battle, and get beaten where they ought to win. They shall not be rejected: ah! no; they shall not be rejected; for great as may be their mistake, they do honestly strive to please their Master, and He loves them too well to let them fall away. But they mar their service; they damp the spirits of their brethren; they lose the place to which they might attain; because they do not know how to press forward.

Yet, again, there are others who hunger and thirst for righteousness, but do not mourn for sin, or mourn very little. And these do not fail in brightness nor in life, but they are very often sadly wanting in depth. To them a sin forsaken is a sin forgotten, whether repented of or not. They are really in earnest in wishing to do right,

in wishing to live Christian lives. But their failures make no impression. They are eager to forget all about it, and treat it as if it had never been, and while taking care not to do it again, to be troubled by it as little as possible. And there is often something wonderfully charming in this buoyancy of spirit. It is for one thing so child-like. It seems so simple, so true, nay, so pure. For a sin which leaves so little trace on the memory we cannot help fancying must have also left little stain on the soul. And if the man be really child-like, really pure, if the sins be really such as to leave no stain, no excess of weakness, no organic disease behind, then this buoyancy justifies itself. Child-like sins need only just that sorrow which suits the child-like character. But it is by no means always so. Sometimes the sins are not child-like at all; and the ease with which they are forgotten indicates not that they have no hold on the man, but that the man has no real sense of the evil of sin. And such a man, if he be ever so eager to serve God, makes no real progress, because his religious feeling wants depth and force. And so, when a day of severer temptation than usual comes, he falls back into old evil because he has never really forsaken it. It is really dangerous to treat what is evil in yourself as not evil, or as slightly evil; to wish to forget what it is disagreeable to remember; to bury the past before you have learnt what it was intended to teach. The result almost always is, that the sin is only half forsaken; the evil wish is not conquered, even if the evil act be controlled. The thought is allowed to wander back, even if the hand

and the tongue be forbidden to transgress. And it is true that the spirit which is eager for good, like St. Peter, is a much greater help to other people than the spirit which is indignant against evil, like St. James and St. John. Yet if that eagerness for good be accompanied with the temper that makes light of evil, that tolerates evil in itself, that shows no strong desire to shake off all that stains and all that hurts, it may positively do more harm than good. Such men must be very real if they are not to lower the standard of right in the minds of their fellows. Too often they encourage by their countenance, or at any rate by their refusal to discountenance, much which they would never do themselves. And at the very best, see what they often have to pass through. They are peculiarly liable to falls, such as St. Peter's; peculiarly liable to be tempted to sudden sins, for it is their very nature to be unprepared against faults. They are peculiarly ignorant of their own weaknesses, because they flinch from fairly facing themselves. They are peculiarly subject to great fluctuations, for much of their heartiness of service rests on no solid bottom. They never get that keen sense of the need of a Redeemer, which to most men is one of the sheet-anchors of the soul; for they know not either the sin from which they require cleansing, nor their own inability to cleanse themselves.

Now each man must look to himself, and apply to his own life that which he particularly needs of the truth in this matter. But I come back to this, that while both are needed, both true penitence, and true longing for

holiness, yet the latter is the higher. It is of course possible, perhaps it is not very uncommon, to have neither the one nor the other. It is quite possible that you neither grieve over wrong nor long for right. But in that case you can hardly be called a Christian at all. I speak to those who, while they are conscious that they are often wanting either in one or in the other, yet are not altogether without a sense of both. And to them I say that it must be remembered that the desire for good is higher in its own nature than the sorrow of evil. The Christian is penitent, and the Christian strives to be a loving child of God; but he knows that the love is more than the repentance. Let not then your sorrow for sin stop at sorrow. Let not your service consist simply in battling with your faults. Try to serve God positively, not negatively. Try to attain nobleness of obedience, and not mere preciseness.

It is a duty to be just to your fellows; but do you aim at being generous. It is a duty to be unselfish; but there is a mere negation of selfishness which gives up without love, and there is a hearty wish to give others pleasure at one's own cost which finds a delight in self-denial for such a reason. Practise the one, and your unselfishness soon withers into mere retirement from other men's enjoyments. Practise the other, and you will find that out of it will come the very perfection of the spirit of courtesy. It is a duty to be true; but be not content with not being false. Rather go out of your way to let yourself be seen as you are. It is a duty to be diligent. But be not content with merely doing

what you have to do; go on until you have done it as well as you really can.

And I say this all the more to the young, because youth is the natural time for enthusiasm, and, if you are enthusiastic about other things and not enthusiastic about the service of Christ, be assured that your Christian character will suffer. It is needful to look honestly from time to time at your own faults, to repent of them before God, to ask pardon for them, to treat them seriously and not to be in a hurry to forget all about them. But it is still more necessary to plunge with hearty active devotion into duty, into that eager discharge of duty which marks that you are not merely satisfying your conscience and grudging all that you do to satisfy it, but that your will and your spirit and the purpose of your life is set upon what is excellent. Aim high as we will, our results will not be too great. But at least let the aim show that our hearts are in what we profess. Assuredly Christ will value more the hearty service of one who perhaps blunders in his eagerness, than the cold obedience which is occupied with nothing but avoiding wrong. Nor be kept back by over-anxiety, by pain at past failures, by bitter sense of weakness. Hearty obedience can never atone for disobedience; but it can often heal the source of it. Do your duty heartily, and many faults that now grieve you will disappear of themselves. For there is a power like a magical charm in serving God, and you will not try it in vain.

September 30, 1866.

SERMON XXIX.

EVEN MISTAKES PUNISHED.

ST. LUKE xii. 47, 48.

'And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.'

EVERY ONE will admit at once the distinction that is here made between the servant that knew and the servant that did not know his lord's will. It is a distinction founded on justice. We constantly act on it; constantly appeal to it. If our Lord had not made it, we should have made it for ourselves; and we should have been justified in doing so by the whole tenor of our Lord's teaching. That sins against light are worse than sins of ignorance; that wrong-doing is not to be confounded with blundering; that God, the source of absolute justice, will not treat a mistake as He will treat a fault,—all these are commonplaces; so true that they hardly seem worth repeating. The startling thing in what our Lord says is, not that the servant who knew not his lord's will shall be beaten with few stripes, but

that he shall be beaten at all. Why is it just to punish him when he did not know that he was doing wrong? Is it not truer to say, as our Lord actually does say in another place, 'If ye were blind, ye should have no sin'?

The same somewhat startling doctrine is to be found in St. Paul's declaration, that he is not conscious of having failed in his duty, and yet that he does not consider this enough to acquit him in God's sight. 'I know nothing,' he says, 'against myself, yet am I not justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.'

Now, in order to understand this, let me first observe that God has so ordered the world that mistakes are punished as well as sins. It is a part of God's system of education. And though very often it is very hard to understand how God should ordain it, yet the fact is undeniable, and no doubt when our knowledge is fuller we shall understand the reason of it better. Mistakes are punished. You take poison by mistake; it kills you just as surely as if you had taken it on purpose. A banker makes a mistake in trusting a customer: he suffers loss, perhaps he is ruined, as surely as if he had spent the money in profligacy. A man makes a foolish intimacy with an unworthy acquaintance. It may be done in the simplest innocence, and yet pursue him with painful consequences through life. It is your business not to make mistakes; and it is your duty not to treat this lightly, but to try very hard to keep clear of them; and, in order to ensure your attention to this duty, the punishment is generally so attached to the

mistake, that however innocent you may have been, the punishment cannot be avoided. If this were not so, the chances are that men would grow careless in the management of their lives. And God does not approve of such careless men.

But we feel at once that the few stripes that our Lord speaks of do not mean merely such punishments as these. Nor is this St. Paul's meaning when he says that his unconsciousness of fault will not acquit him. It is plain that in both cases something more is meant. The punishment which comes on a blunder seems as it were to have no anger in it. It does not separate us from God for a moment. We feel as if it was not His hand that inflicted it. It is no doubt His doing; but not to our feelings in the same sense. It seems to be rather the working of the machinery which He has created than His direct act. Our Lord seems to mean more, and surely St. Paul means more than this.

This brings me to the point that I particularly wish to dwell on: I mean the mixture of knowledge with ignorance, of sight with blindness, which so very often deludes us, and which lays in our way several snares against which we have need to guard.

You do wrong, and you say when you look back that you did not know that it was wrong. Now, very often indeed this means that you did not see *how* wrong it was; perhaps that you had not a plain distinct imperative warning from conscience that you must not do it; perhaps that you had only faint suspicions, passing qualms, that you were not doing right. But very rarely is it the

case that you can say that the wrong was absolutely hidden from your eyes.

I do not mean that it is quite inconceivable that wrong should be absolutely hidden from the eyes of the doer. Our consciences are certainly not infallible. And when we say that a man's conscience is his supreme guide, and that he must obey it, we do not mean that it is always right, but we mean that the man cannot as things are get any guide that will be more right. It is not a perfect guide, but it is the best he has. And we are quite certain too that if he follows it honestly, he will find it a better guide every day of his life, and if not right at first it will become more and more right. It will inevitably take him where more light is to be got; and if it begin in blindness, it will end in seeing. Inasmuch, then, as this conscience of ours is imperfect; inasmuch as it is not itself God's Holy Spirit, but the mouth through which the Spirit speaks; inasmuch as it is not the glorious law of God, but the glass which reflects that law; inasmuch as it is not a perfect guide, but only the best guide we can obtain; inasmuch as it is not itself the light, but the channel through which whatever light is to reach us must inevitably pass in order to reach at all; it is plain that in some matters it may be quite dark. And then our Lord's words apply, that those who are blind have no sin.

But this case is, I say, exceedingly rare. As a rule, there is always some glimmering of light, quite enough to show that all is not quite what it should be, whenever a Christian does wrong. There are other Christians

within his knowledge who do not agree with him. There are passages in the Bible which do not quite square with his conduct. There are doubts in his own mind. There is a sense of not being engaged in Christ's service. There is enough to stir a heart set on duty if not to do differently, at any rate to pause, to inquire, to reflect. There is that which most certainly will make us feel at the day of judgment that we cannot honestly plead that total darkness which alone can be a complete excuse. Look at it in detail.

Men are often proud without knowing that it is wrong. Nay, they are sometimes proud of their pride; think that it is something in its own nature elevated; think it akin to strength, to courage, to resolution; think it commands admiration, if it cannot command approval; sometimes, perhaps, they confound it with the self-respect which really belongs to true humility. Yet in spite of all this they are rarely able to bring it before God, and beg for His help in cherishing it. Why not? Because they are conscious that it is not quite right, even at the best. And when it makes them refuse to confess a fault, or to set right an injury, as it too often does, it is absurd for them to delude themselves with the thought that they see nothing wrong in it.

Or again, nothing is more common than for a man to be all but blinded by a fit of temper. He is angry, or he is sulky, and he indulges his own bitterness in his heart; and he persuades himself, or half persuades himself, that he does well to be angry. He is angry at what is wrong, he thinks he has been unfairly used, or he has

been slighted, or he has been thwarted needlessly, and the injustice makes him angry, and he is right to be angry. And the feeling of being in the right is so strong in his mind that the ill temper seems to be quite justified. Yet, assuredly, his blindness is never so great but that he is all along half conscious of it. If he would but force himself to look away from the real or fancied wrong that he has suffered to the duty that God requires now from him, he would very speedily see that whatever else was wrong, he, at any rate, was not right.

Or again, nothing is more blinding than vanity. A man who indulges it seems very often quite unconscious just at the moment that he is doing or saying anything conceited or vain. Or again, the blinding power of selfishness is so exceedingly great, that if you will let it, it will wrap you round in a sort of spiritual slumber, and you shall become thoroughly self-indulgent while you fancy that you are but having your natural rights. And yet in both these cases, if some rude shock awakes you, you know full well that you were never quite in the dark, and that you might at any moment, if you had chosen, have seen the truth about yourself.

This sort of semi-blindness, however, is a very common and a very serious hindrance in the way of all Christians. Very, very often we cannot plead that we are quite blind; and yet we seem not to see enough to rouse us to true obedience. It is like a spell or a nightmare. It is like that sort of dream when you feel as if you had the power to awake but could not use the power. And there is one class of minds peculiarly liable to suffer from

it; I mean all those who from natural constitution are moved by duty much more than by love. These, who are very often very true servants of God, more often perhaps what we should call true, honest servants than affectionate children, these are subject to this as if to a kind of disease. They see and yet do not see their own deficiency. They condemn and yet do not condemn their own faults. They want to please God, and yet often fail, and know that they fail, because of some fault of this kind which seems to paralyse much of their spiritual life. But even those who not only try to do their duty, but come to God as their Father, even they are liable to the same difficulty, and very often do wrong as it were in a kind of dream.

What is the cure? Assuredly the cure is to turn more earnestly to God. You want to do your duty. Yes; but if you would know your duty you must copy the pattern set before you in the Psalm, and as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress, so must your eyes wait upon the Lord your God. Try to forget yourself; to forget your own rights and claims; your own wishes and hopes; and to think only of what you think will please God best. Whenever you feel not quite sure whether you are in the right; whenever a slight suspicion crosses you that your ill temper is not reasonable, and that your indignation is not pure objection to injustice, that your wish to have your own way is not quite unselfish, that your disinclination to confess a a fault is not really pride; whenever you have an uneasy

though but a passing thought that perhaps your view of right is not the right view, try to think what will be most pleasing to Christ, and judge by that. For you may be sure that as the thought of Christ is strength very often when we are weak, and comfort when we are in trouble, so is it also light very often when we are in darkness; a light that will not be refused to those who seek it.

October 14, 1866.

SERMON XXX.

TEMPTATIONS FROM WITHIN.

ST. JAMES i. 13, 14.

'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.'

TO say 'I am tempted by God' sounds irreverent, and no religious man would use such an expression. But change the words slightly and say, not 'I am tempted' but 'I am tried of God,' and there is irreverence no longer, and all religious men will find it a help in their trials to feel that they may say this, and may look on their trials as coming from that Providence which governs all things by love. The difference plainly is this. To say 'I am tempted of God' implies that God's purpose in sending the temptation is to lead the tempted into sin; to say 'I am tried of God' implies that God's purpose is to educate the man who is tried by sending the trial to exercise his spiritual strength. This distinction is a part of what St. James means here. He means to reprove that fatalism which besets all of us at times,

and inclines us to say when we do wrong that it was not our doing, that we could not help ourselves, that it is our nature, that we were made so, or in other words, for discuss it how you will it comes to that, that God was the real cause of the sin.

Now on the one side it is so mere a commonplace to any Christian to say that God is not the cause of our sins, that it seems hardly worth while to say another word about the matter; and on the other side nothing is more common than a disguised acquiescence in this false and mischievous notion. For there can be little doubt that no one, or at any rate almost no one, ever deliberately supposes that God made him do wrong; but still, whatever may be the belief or theory of the matter, we do very often so entirely turn away our minds from our own blame, and so entirely fix them on the circumstances that have conduced to our sin, that practically it comes to the same thing as if we were mere fatalists. If it had not been for this friend's foolish or sinful example; if it had not been for this unlucky accident; if it had not been for the tempting opportunity just coming when I was already very weak; if it had not been for the provocation which threw me off my balance, I should not have gone wrong. There is rarely any truth whatever in these excuses. Sin is so truly a plant that springs from within, that, excepting some rare cases, he who would do wrong in one set of circumstances would in another. You found temptation in this incident. Well, if it had not happened you would have found the same temptation or another quite as bad in

something else. And if you had been really true to your own conscience, you would have found very little temptation either in one or the other. There are, no doubt, a few rare exceptions to this. But they do not affect the general rule. I am not, however, so much concerned just now with the truth or falsehood of these excuses, as with the notion implied in them. You did wrong, but the fault, you say, is not yours; the sin was really caused by circumstances. Then whose fault was it? Whose except His who guided circumstances to such a point? What is this but saying indirectly that you are tempted by God? And it is precisely this that St. James is here forbidding. Your temptation, he tells you, comes from within. As God cannot Himself be tempted, so neither does He tempt. The power of the temptation is in you.

Now the human weakness which makes us so ready to lay our faults on circumstances is mischievous in preventing our repentance from being so deep as it ought to be. There can be no doubt that it is a bad thing in itself, that instead of feeling really sorry when we have done wrong, we should get rid of the uncomfortable thought as soon as we can by saying that we could not help ourselves. But this is by no means the whole nor the greatest part of the mischief. The chief evil is not in stopping regrets for the past, but preventing real exertion for the future. And this evil is so very terrible in every way, that we are bound with all our strength to contend against the intrusion of this false idea into our minds.

Thus, for instance, this is one of the usual attendants on all habitual sins. If you once allow yourself to fall into a habit of evil of whatever kind, the idea that you are helpless, that you are made so, that it is your nature, will very speedily creep in and try to lay hold of your mind. Whether it be a sin of passion or of temper which comes only at times, leaving you free to live a right and perhaps even a religious life in the intervals, and returning with a sort of easy victory in the hour of temptation, making your falls all the more miserable by their contrast with your happier and better moments; or some of those palsies of the soul which seem to benumb the will, sloth for instance, or selfishness; or again, a petty fault which mars all your life without seeming ever to stain it deeply, making you ashamed and justly ashamed that you should find a difficulty in overcoming such a trifle; in such cases, over and above the temptation to the sin itself, there soon comes the added temptation to treat it as hopeless, to give up in despair, to reconcile yourself to your enemy, and say that you are made so and cannot do otherwise. And this is indeed no trifling addition. The one chance of escape from habitual sin is never to intermit the struggle: do that, and you are quite sure to conquer; some better opportunity for getting power over the temptation presents itself; or the temptation seems to go away of itself, you do not know how; or it returns less and less frequently till it returns no more; its going may be in one way or in another; but persevere in the battle, and go it surely will. Thus ere now have Christians overcome

bodily temptations, to some men the severest trials of all; thus have Christians tamed down unruly temper; thus have they conquered pride and vanity; thus have they taught themselves to be true. But all this is simply impossible if once the false fancy is allowed to seize the soul, that your fault is not your own, but due to the circumstances of your life.

What is thus chiefly applicable to our individual lives, is also in its measure applicable to society and to all actions of society. There is precisely the same temptation to acquiesce in the practices of society as if they were part of the ordinance of God, and as if the members of that society were not responsible for whatever may be wrong in them. There are, of course, in every society certain matters which are regulated and ought to be regulated by the society itself. What shall be the prevalent understanding on which all ordinary intercourse is to rest, is generally a matter which every society must determine in its own case. And in consequence of this, every society and every section of it invariably forms a code of laws of its own. This code grows up as it were insensibly. No one can say exactly how it is made, but its operation is undeniably powerful. It is by no means identical with the law of conscience, nor is it requisite that it should be. But it is requisite that it should never contradict the law of conscience even in the slightest particulars. Now being as it is human and fallible, it will every now and then contradict that law, and then comes the temptation of which I speak. The temptation is to look on the evil even when

you feel it to be an evil as hopeless, as incurable, as a sort of natural production. It may be quite true that you alone cannot set the evil right; but that does not by any means justify you in thinking of it as if it came in some mysterious way from God Himself, as if it were inevitable, as if it ceased to be wrong, because the wrong is divided among so many. You cannot set it right. No; but you can do something towards setting it right. You can at least refuse to join in upholding it. You can on proper occasions express your disapproval. You can resolutely refuse to let it determine your own conduct. And not only you can, but you must, if you are to be a Christian. And the temptation to acquiesce is not, as you fancy, an ordinance of Providence at all, but your own weakness and nothing else.

Yet once more, it is the same sort of false notion which makes a man whose faults are mostly of the negative sort, quietly live out his life without a thought of anything higher. Your character, it may be, is such as will not wrong other people, and therefore will not bring upon you the discomfort which always pursues those that make themselves disagreeable. So you can go along quietly enjoying yourself, and thinking of nothing else. So, too, could the rich man live, at whose gate lay Lazarus full of sores, and longing for a few crumbs. This sort of easy, contented, self-satisfied life, the life of him who never exerts himself to do a kindness, who knows no self-denial, who cares not to serve his country, his church, or his neighbours, this is not merely not good, it is wrong. It is the life of the servant who hid his

lord's money in the earth. You have, you cannot help having, opportunities of serving God. But there is no visible commensurate reward. There is no attraction. It is hard to stir, to exert one's self, to deny one's self when no end is to be attained. Such excuses as these will not be accepted. You are God's servant, and you are bound to look closely whether you are really serving Him, and not to say that His Providence has not provided you with work that you like to do.

In conclusion, let me sum all up in this: that it is hardly possible to exaggerate the difference between duty as we dream of it, and duty as we are called to do it. We ever dream of a duty, the doing of which shall bring its own reward in satisfying our imagination with a sort of sense of our own excellence. We find it ever so mixed up with drawbacks, difficulties, shortcomings of our own, that we are half ashamed of it when we have done it. We cannot, we cannot bring ourselves to believe the fundamental truth of all morals and all religion which is expressed in the proverb, 'He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city.' We dream of duty as just difficult enough to require a real exertion, and then fine and glorious in the show. We find it so difficult as to tax our utmost strength of will, and it looks poor when it is done. We feel as if our strength had ever to be spent on the wrong thing. That which tries us is the strong power of some secret temptation, whose victory over us is a misery, but whose defeat, if we can defeat it, gives us no credit; nay, perhaps is such that we care not to confess it to a single soul.

We always dream of duty in one set of circumstances. We always have to do it in another. And it is in preferring these dreams of ours to the reality that we are betrayed into the mistake of assigning our sins to the circumstances of our life. If I were set to do this or that, if I were in a different place, if I were among different companions, if I had different superiors, if I had work better suited to my character, then what should I not do? Ah, you know not what you would do the least, for even if all these things were so, you still would find that dreaming and doing were very different things. But however that may be, it is quite plain that duty can only be duty when done as required, not when done in chosen and adapted circumstances. You are to be judged, you are to be valued, you are to be aided, you are to be purified, not as you might be if things were otherwise, but as you are. Cease to indulge in vain dreams of what might have been, and see what duty really is. Our Master Christ has given you this thing to do: say not that you are ready to do something else but not this; say not that this is just what you cannot do; say not that you are a mere peg in a machine and have no power to move. All this is either sloth or sheer blindness. Here, as things are, with the help within your reach, you can win your victory. And what is more, however little it may seem so now, you shall one day see that the victory was worth the winning.

October 21, 1866.

SERMON XXXI.

MORALITY AND RELIGION.

ST. MATTHEW iii. 1, 2.

'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

THE season of Advent, which commences this day, is one of the seasons specially appointed for review of life and repentance from sin, as the season of Lent is the other. But there is a difference between the two. For Lent calls us to the repentance of feeling, and Advent to the repentance of thought. In Lent we are looking forward to that great sacrifice of love which took away our sins; we are thinking of the Cross, and of the work which the Cross was intended to do; if we have human hearts, we cannot then fail to be stricken with sorrow for that evil in our lives which our Lord died to cleanse; if we are capable of feeling at all, we truly must be touched with a sense of the love which calls us away by the life of sorrow, by the agony in the Garden, by the death of anguish, from the sin which keeps us from our Father. Surely then our repentance is meant to be the repentance

of the heart, of the feelings, of passionate love, of the returning prodigal, of the weeping Magdalen. But in Advent we are summoned to a different kind of sorrow, to a different kind of self-discipline. We are now looking forward to the judgment; we are preparing for the great review which shall take account of our lives; we are summoned to an absolutely just tribunal. We must prepare for it by anticipating it. 'If we would judge ourselves,' says St. Paul, 'we should not be judged.' The repentance now demanded is the repentance of sober thought, of reflection on our present life, of judgment on our spiritual progress. There may indeed be much to touch our feelings of affection, there may be much to fill our hearts with sorrow; we may find the return of the prodigal no inappropriate example to follow. But the special work of the season is to think rather than to feel; to see clearly what we have to mend, and to bend our will to mend it; to put our minds as well as our hearts to our duties, for God commands the service of all our faculties, and it is well, when our worship in its regular sequence reminds us of special truths, that our thoughts and our devotions and all our spiritual life should follow, and make due use of the occasion thus provided.

We are approaching the season when we celebrate the coming of Christ, and look forward to His coming again. Our thoughts are led to the same expectation which made John the Baptist preach repentance; he preached because the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Now he was the forerunner of our Lord; and how did he prepare the people to receive their coming Saviour?

As far as we know of the preaching of John the Baptist, it consisted in what we should call the enforcement of moral duties. Soon after, our Lord Himself began His own ministry, and his public teaching opened with the great discourse which ever since all Christians have known as the Sermon on the Mount. And what is the general tenor of this sermon? Again it consists in the enforcement of what we should call moral duties. There is nothing that you call speculation in it; nothing that we ordinarily call by the name of doctrine; nothing that our conscience does not instantly confirm as being, even if first given to man by revelation, yet now, at any rate, within the reach of our own moral judgment. And still, through our Lord's teaching to the very end, the same principle ever returns, that whatever else may be needed to be His servant, this, at any rate, is indispensable, that you shall *do* God's will, that your life's action shall be governed by God's law, that you shall bring forth good fruits. It is out of the question to plead that you loved earnestly, that you felt keenly, that you wished very much to do right, if meanwhile your life has shown no results from this earnest love, from this keen feeling, from this great desire. Let us make what deduction we please on the score of human weakness, of human blindness; let us allow that a man may often, nay, will always, fall far short of his own ideal; let us allow that even good men sometimes do very wrong, and that not even the best are sinless; still there remains the undeniable truth, that that is no religion at all which produces no fruit in the life. The life, the deeds of a man, are not the whole of him. There

is much behind that man may sometimes take account of. There is still more that God will take account of. But if not the whole of a man, yet this life, these fruits of his character, these issues from the hidden springs within, are a very large part of him; and if these are not God's, and, in so far as they are not God's, neither does the man belong to God.

With this, then, it is quite plain all Christians must begin. You are a Christian. You are called on to think of the judgment of God. You are called on to judge yourself in anticipation of that judgment. What is the first thing to do? Look at your life.

And in order to make it easier to reflect seriously on our lives and on the true character of them, let us, as it were, gather them up under two chief heads, the one that which should be the governing rule of our conduct, taken in itself, and the other that which especially touches our relations with other men; I mean, principle and temper. Let us look a little at these two points. Let us see whether our principles are Christian, and whether our tempers are Christian, for whenever we fail in either of these we have great need of repentance and amendment.

Now, we all mean by principle that strong sense of duty which keeps us straight in all cases in which we are not taken by surprise, or misled by mistake, and even in those cases, never lets us wander far, but quickly checks the straying feet, and calls us to the path. The characteristic of principle is trustworthiness. The man of principle will live in secret as he lives in public, and will not gratify a wish when it cannot be known, which he would

not gratify if it could be known. The man of principle is emphatically the man who loves the light, and comes to the light. When the poet said of a great warrior, 'whatever records leap to light, he never shall be shamed,' he described a man of high principle. There is a great deal of goodness among men which comes from no principle at all. Sometimes, for instance, a man is quite one thing in one company, and quite another thing in another; and such a one, when in the company of the good, will himself be good. And that goodness is not hypocritical, it is quite genuine; but it has no depth, it comes from no principle.

Again, some will show much perseverance and steadiness in their duty as long as they are tolerably successful; but if they make one mistake, if they fail at all, they give up all effort at once. For their effort did not come from principle, but from the pleasure of success. Again, some will indulge wrong thoughts to the very utmost, and think it quite enough to abstain from wrong deeds or wrong words. But why? The wrong thought is not as great a sin, but it is as real a sin as the wrong deed or word. The fact is, that such men do not abstain from wrong on principle, but either from shame or from fear of consequences. So, in various ways, much that seems good, and, I will add, much that is good, still has not in it the depth of true principle. I say much that is good, for I by no means mean to deny that even this shallow good, which has no genuine root in it, yet is really good as far as it goes, may possibly be the germ of something much better, may possibly be the smoking flax which the

Lord will not quench, and which will burst into flame by-and-bye. But when we are looking soberly at our lives, we cannot lay much stress on such good as this. It does not come from any principle of good. It is not worth much. Principle is trustworthy, is steady, is always growing stronger. Whether in absence or in presence, whether the duty be little or great, whether the attraction to sin be strong or weak, the man of principle is the same. He does right because it is right; not because of a momentary impulse, not because his company happens at the time to be of the right sort, not because other eyes are on him, not because wrong will bring mischief, but because it is right.

And of course it is true that a man of real principle will sometimes be taken off his guard and will do wrong, and then his principle will be sorely tried, for there are few trials harder than having to set right a wrong act, whether it be by confessing it, as is sometimes needed, or by repairing it, as is also sometimes needed. Yet even against such sins as these of surprise a man of principle gradually wins a wonderful protection. For out of principle is sure to grow an instinct of right which warns a man against wrong, even when as yet he does not distinctly see that it is wrong. A man of principle might be betrayed, possibly, into want of truth; but not often even betrayed, for he surely comes at last to find a check in the instinct of his conscience. A man of principle might step into an ungenerous act; but not often would he even slip; he would be checked even before he could plainly see the wrong.

This, then, is what I mean by principle. Apply it to

our own lives. See how much of our lives is right by a sort of happy accident, by absence of temptation, by presence of all manner of aids. But see, too, how we slip here because we are hid from sight, and there because we believe that we shall be so hidden; and here because our company laughs us out of our principles; and there because our usual support is taken away. See how fitful, uncertain, untrustworthy we often are. Look to this, and you will assuredly find much to mend.

Yet again, it is quite possible to have right principles, to be quite trustworthy, to be quite true, to be unchanged by mere change of circumstances, and yet to spoil all by want of control of temper. We are charged by God to an indefinite degree with each other's happiness. We know that we can make each other happy or unhappy with marvellous ease. And there is no one duty which the New Testament more incessantly teaches than the duty of contributing to each other's happiness. So frequently does this come up in the New Testament, and especially in our Lord's own teaching, that religious men sometimes feel a sort of wonder that so much should be said about making each other happy in a Book whose chief object is rather to make us holy. But so it is. And of all the means which we have for touching each other's happiness, either to make it or to spoil it, there is none that can be compared with the temper. A really good man, with a temper not thoroughly chastened, will sometimes inflict far more pain on all with whom he comes in contact, than a man of sweet temper who has no depth of principle at all. And the worst is that

temper is terribly blinding, and when any one gives way to it, it shuts his eyes for the time to what he is doing, and he never thinks how wrong he is, or how much pain he gives. High principle must of course stand above disciplined temper; but let not any Christian dream that to leave temper unchecked is a light sin in the eyes of the God of love. How can it be? For it is a trial to love, and it is a weight upon duty, and it is a chill to devotion, and it is blindness to the spiritual sight, and it is hardness to the feelings, and it ends at last in lowering the whole character. For not even high principle can be retained for ever against the effect of self-indulged temper on the soul.

Now, in all such reviews of life as we naturally make at fit seasons, we remember, as a matter of course, that to find ourselves seriously in the wrong cannot be to a Christian anything but a reason for a renewed return to his Lord and Master for help to amend that wrong to the very uttermost. But at such a season as this, how serious should be such a review! With what deep, with what fervent resolutions should such a review be followed! Christ our Master seems to be with us when we are looking at ourselves. His love, His tenderness, are present to our minds when we see how far we have been from true obedience to His will. Can we not put more depth henceforward into our religious life? Can we not compel ourselves to hold more fast by plain rules of right, to be more trustworthy, to be less changed by every wind that blows? Can we not again hold in that rising ill-temper which gives so much pain, which cuts off so much love?

We cannot doubt that the pain which our ill-temper gives to our fellow-men is as nothing to the pain which it gives to our Lord. And can we not prepare for Christmas by learning to sweeten, to soften, to check such evil feelings? We cannot make ourselves perfect all at once; but oh! how infinitely nearer do we seem to come to God when we make but a beginning of trying to please Him better than before. His arms are round us, and we feel them the moment our will sets our feet to walk in His way. His arms are round us with forgiveness, given before it is asked, for the penitent knows the first moment of repentance that his sin is pardoned, and that he himself is taken home to his Father's heart.

December 2, 1866.

SERMON XXXII.

WORKS OF DARKNESS.

ST. JOHN iii. 20.

'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.'

ALL through this season we are repeating, after the Collect for the day, the Collect for the First Sunday in Advent, and asking God's grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light. We acknowledge the force of the Apostle's exhortation, that it is high time to awake out of sleep; the night is far spent, the day is at hand. When, indeed, the day of Christ's return shall come we have not the slightest notion, but our own life is so short, that this practically makes no difference in the rule by which we are to guide our lives. We are close upon the other world; we are close on that gate of death by which we pass into the clear eternal light. Most certainly it would strike us all with a thrill if we were assured by an authority which we could not doubt that the judgment-day would come within the next fifty years; and yet to us it really amounts to the same thing; for very few

among us can look forward to another fifty years of life. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. It is time to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.

What are the works of darkness? They are defined in the Gospel by the words that I have quoted. They are the works which a man does not like to bring to the light, lest they should be reproved. Whatever you would feel ashamed, in conscience, that your fellow-men should know; whatever you tried to hide in the doing, and still try to hide now that it is done, from a sense of guilty fear; whatever alarms you when you think of the possibility of its detection, that is a work of darkness. It is not every kind of evil that always seeks the dark. There are some sins which derive a kind of horrible grandeur from defying the light. But this is not the character of most sins. Most sins prefer the darkness.

When, therefore, we speak of the works of darkness, we mean almost all evil that we can do. But we mean to speak of a particular aspect of them. Sins will vary in their scale and proportion, as it were, according to the measure which is applied to them. They may be tested by the mischief they do to others by their example or evil contagion; they may be tested by the mischief that they do to the soul of the sinner by polluting it, by weakening it, or by blinding it; they may be tested by the pains which they inflict; they may be tested by the clearness of the prohibition which has forbidden them. And all these different tests would put them in a different

order; would give a different rule of pre-eminence; would call for a different kind of condemnation on them; would stir the conscience with a different emotion. And so, when we call them works of darkness, we mean to view them from a particular point, and to pronounce judgment on them as seen thus and thence. We mean to ask our consciences to think of them in that light; to judge them by that rule; to assign to them in their measure the sort of stigma which belongs to that kind of evil.

This stigma is the sense of shame. And it is necessary to demand that our consciences should examine what this sense will say, because the answer that we get is very often singularly different from, is almost always far deeper and truer than, the answer that we get by appealing to any other standard. If we ask ourselves, what harm has our conduct done, too often the harm is quite hidden from our eyes, and too often the harm, even if we could see it at all, would be no true measure of our guilt. So instinctively do we know this to be the case, that it is the commonest of all excuses for having done wrong, to ask, 'what harm is it?' We *see* no ill consequences; and if there be no ill consequences, we like to infer that it cannot be very evil. We know, perhaps, perfectly well, that the excuse is worthless, but we seize upon it, not because it satisfies our own consciences, but because we feel that it would be difficult to answer, and it sounds plausible. Or again, if we measure faults by punishment, we know that human punishment cannot be any true measure of degrees of wrong, and Divine punish-

ment has not yet worked out to its end, and therefore we cannot judge by it. But the test of shame is not to be so perverted. If we honestly ask the soul, if there be any part of the conduct which it would be painful to have revealed to others; if we ask whether we could submit, without flinching, to lay bare the life; if we ask whether we ever do what we would rather should never be known, the answer may not be infallible, but it will be nearer the truth as a judgment on our lives than almost any other we could get.

And see how real the answer is; how it seems to come from some other power, and not from ourselves! Very often it is almost like a revelation, and a thing that seemed a trifle becomes on a sudden utterly without excuse the moment we fancy that some one else is to know it. We judge ourselves by a fair, honest trial, perhaps; we see that this is wrong, and that this is excusable. We pass sentence on what we have done. We are sorry for the wrong, and determine not to repeat it. But what is all this in comparison with the new thrill of pain when we fancy to ourselves that it cannot or that it must not be concealed? There is, as it were, an utter inversion of all our previous judgment. A different thing stands at the head of our offendings. But not only so; not the order only, but the whole keenness and force of our condemnation becomes new, and we see in a way that nothing else can teach us what an evil thing is sin, what shame, what utter self-condemnation, what stinging and bitter pain is its natural portion.

We are here strangers and pilgrims. This is not our home. We are going hence soon home to our Father, home to our truest friends and lovers, home to the gentlest of all affectionate welcomes, home to a love which shrinks not even from the Cross. But there is one inevitable condition attached to our going home. We shall have to lay bare every single thing that we have done to eyes that love, before faces that, perhaps, will not be able to conceal their surprise, their pain, their shame on our account, a shame almost harder to bear than any anger. Then shall be seen by those who have loved us what it is that they have loved. Then shall be seen the disappointment of friends who had thought so much of us. Then shall be seen the astonishment of those who had trusted us entirely. Then shall be brought to clear light the secret sin, the long-cherished evil thought, the many hidden acts of shame which would have made men estimate the doer so differently had they known the truth. St. Paul speaks of that day of the Lord as revealed by fire, and of some who have kept the true foundation, yet have built such wood, and hay, and stubble into their characters that that fire shall burn it up, and they themselves, though saved, yet shall be saved so as by fire. What he means by fire we cannot tell. But well may one part of the fire be that searching and scorching shame which shall burn, as it were, the very soul of him who has deeds of darkness staining his life.

Try your life by the nearer and directer test of asking whether there is any one thing in your conduct

that you would be ashamed that your father and mother here on earth should be told. Try whether you are living so that it would give you no deep and bitter pain, it would not make you hang your head, it would not thrill you with alarm, if your mother or your father were somehow to know it as God knows it. Try whether your joy in going home would be dashed by the thought of such a revelation. Whether, in the other world, the sinner will be required to tell his own sins, I cannot tell. St. Paul says expressly that all secrets shall be made manifest; but he does not say how. But if you had, immediately on returning home, to go over all your life since you last left it, and to tell every single thing that you had done, of which your conscience now reminded you, if you had to say all the wrong that you had done or said or thought when quite alone, all that you had joined in, all that you had promoted, would it always be such pure joy to return to those who love you best on earth? Nay, would not their love make it all the harder to have to tell them, to have to bear their pain and shame at hearing it, to have to live in their company after you had told them? Think of the shame that this would bring on you; think of the shrinking of the conscience, of the hiding of the face, of the inability of the voice to begin, and you will have some sort of measure by which you may judge how far your life is right.

The conscience is constantly present, and will warn us when we do wrong; but it gains quite a wonderful

incisiveness and power when we call upon it not merely to judge of itself, but to call in a mother's or a father's face as an assessor in the Court. What it gives you such pain to tell, what sort of a thing must that have been to do?

The darkness of a deed, the love of darkness that is seen in it, the fear of light, is a sure test of its being evil. But if you look at it from the other side, you will feel it quite as strongly. For just so we cannot help always assigning a peculiar value to openness, to willingness that all shall be known, to readiness to confess what is wrong. Nay, so strong is this, that we often put involuntarily a double trust in one who has confessed a fault of his own accord, and we feel more sure of him than we do of one against whom we know of no fault. The openness of confessing often shows a truer, a more trustworthy, a deeper character than any fault, however grave, can mar or lower in our eyes. And we would rather put the most absolute confidence in one who could not rest without telling of a serious fault that he had committed, than in very many who never, to our knowledge, had committed any fault at all.

So, then, at this season, when we are required to prepare for Christmas by serious reflection, I would urge you to use this rule in measuring and valuing the life that you are living—how far would you be willing to tell your father or your mother everything that you do? For if you are doing what you would not like them to know, you cannot be doing right. Try your life by the test of light and darkness. How

much of it is either open already, or might be laid open without your feeling any shame or dread? How much of it seeks the darkness as its true and proper abode? For God is emphatically the God of light. In His city we are told there is no night. In Himself we are told there is no darkness at all. We, if we are to be His children, must be like Himself. We must cast away the works of darkness, and put on us the armour of light.

December 16, 1866.

SERMON XXXIII.

ALL LIGHT FADES BUT THE HIGHEST.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 12, 13.

'Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.'

I THINK it almost certain that in this passage St. Paul founded his argument on the Septuagint account of the reason why Moses put the veil upon his face. For in our authorised version the narrative in Exodus represents Moses as putting a veil before his face in order to hide the glory which shone from it while he was delivering the message of God to the people. But the Septuagint translators represent him as putting on the veil, not in order to hide the glory, but in order that they might not see that glory fade away; in order that they might not observe how that glory was a perishable thing, and how, as soon as the message was delivered, it passed from his face, and his countenance became once more like that of another man. I think it very

probable that the Septuagint translators were right, and that the Hebrew really did mean what they understood it to mean. But however that may be, it does not, I think, admit of much doubt that St. Paul here followed the Septuagint, and that his argument is this: Moses was obliged to hide his face with a veil, or otherwise his people would have seen what it was not good for them to see, that the glory of his revelation was transitory. We need no such veil; for the glory of our revelation is permanent. Had the old system worn no veil, the people would have learnt too soon that it was not the last, the highest, the best, that it was but a preparation, that its glory was destined to pass away. And then their reverence for it would have been broken down. Everything was therefore half hidden under veils, and figures, and types: everywhere they were surrounded by mystery, by symbol, by allegory; and all this hid, and was intended to hide, the fact, that they had not yet reached the true and final revelation of God. But we can be plain. For the more our glory is gazed at, the brighter it glows, and the more unchangeable.

Now, this is not a peculiar characteristic of the history of Moses. It attends all revelations, all enlightenment. Light always comes to the soul with a peculiar glory; but all light, except the very highest, is quite sure to lose its glory as time goes on. We see it; we are caught by it. But if it be not the glory of absolute truth, we are sure at last

'To see it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.'

Let us look at this in our own personal experience, in the experience of our own lives. We experience sometimes great changes come over our lives for different reasons; what comes of these changes afterwards?

For instance, you fall in with some person who catches your admiration; who seems to you to have found the true secret of what is worth doing and being; whom you look up to, wonder at, long to imitate; who seems to be walking on a more excellent path, in a more splendid light. Not always, perhaps, is he quite like what you have been told to admire; not always does he live by the rules of right that you have heard inculcated; not always would he be approved by recognised authorities. But to you he seems worthy of all admiration. How long does this last? Assuredly not for ever. You see more of him, or more of others. You learn that he has weaknesses. Perhaps your own mind gradually grows away from him. Perhaps you are separated from him for a time, and when you meet again you find that either in him or in you there is a great change. Somehow, your admiration will not remain.

But that is not all. Perhaps he was in many ways really worth imitation. Perhaps you really got much good from him. You find his example and his presence a real help to you. And now all that is gone. He was your guide, and you fancied that he would be always your guide. But he can guide you no longer. It may be that you think very highly of him still; but all that light which once seemed to you to shine in his life has quite faded away. At any rate, you cannot see it. It may be,

all the while, that there is in his life a still higher and more heavenly light which you have never seen at all: which has not faded from your sight, simply because it was never within your sight. It may be that he is really more worth your admiration than you ever fancied him to be; and that while you have been caught and dazzled by lower qualities, you have never seen at all the higher graces that he really had. That may be, or may not be. But so it is, that your old admiration has lost its heat, and you do not see that he is very different from others.

Or, again, we are sometimes laid hold of by new thoughts. A poet, a preacher, an author has enlightened us. We shake off a good deal that we can see was folly. We determine to live by that higher philosophy which we have just met with. We rule our life accordingly. We leave off this practice; we commence that. We think we are entering on a new and, as it were, a divine path. And we find a sort of brightness about all this while it is new. But here, too, the brightness does not last. After a while our rules of life seem mechanical. Much of our philosophy seems commonplace. The formulæ in which we have expressed the truth to ourselves seem questionable. In so far as we have tried to be unlike other people, we begin to be doubtful whether it was worth while. And it is quite possible that we should slip back into much folly that we had quitted; simply because we no longer care for the light that once seemed so bright.

Or, again, it is not a new light that has come before our

eyes, but rather a new warmth that has come into our hearts. We are fired with the desire of being noble, of imitating men whose lives we have read, of doing something great. We are caught by the feeling, what a satisfaction there must be in doing something really excellent. What a satisfaction there must be in the consciousness of generous self-denial; or, again, of difficult duty cheerfully done; or, again, of thorough unflinching truth; or, again, of helping others to be happier and better. There is a glory about the lives of men who have done such things, which we would fain make our own. Such men live in the world's memory; they are admired, they are followed. Why should we not win what they have won?

And so we set ourselves to copy their lives. And we try to be unselfish and generous. And we try to win respect by invariable truth. And we try to do duty manfully and well. But yet somehow, after all, that brightness which seemed so splendid in their lives, fades out of ours. Perhaps at first we think that we have it. But we never think so long. Much of our exertion seems wasted. Much of our lives that we meant to make so bright turns out very commonplace and poor. We seem inclined to turn round on our consciences and say, 'I have tried it, and its brightness does not last. It seems bright as you set it before me; but it fades quite away in the doing.'

In short, no Christian does not at times feel disappointed with himself, with his life, with his very conscience, with the promises that the Gospel seemed to make to him. He fancied that he should find rest, and he gets

trouble; and he fancied he should find sunshine, and he gets gloom; and he fancied he should get a glorious victory, and it is all that he can say if he have not been signally defeated. And when he looks outside himself, there is very often the same feeling. He fancied that he should find a great help in some friend, and the friend seems to be no more than any one else. And he fancied some special rules of life would aid him, and, as soon as they have become familiar, they have seemed useless. And he fancied prayer would hold him up; and he has offered many prayers in vain.

What is the reason? It is that everything fades at last which is not the very highest, which is not, indeed, the glory of God Himself.

Let us not refuse the lower as a step to the higher. Be not angry with yourself for having leant upon that which you cannot lean on any longer. Do not think any time or any efforts have been thrown away which have failed to conduct you to the top. Moses, and the glory on the face of Moses, were not useless, because the teaching of Moses was destined to perish, and the glory on his face was but transitory. Lower motives, lower impulses (provided, of course, we exclude bad motives and bad impulses), are not to be refused in their proper place. They are often helps to our weakness; stepping-stones to excellence; rudiments of higher lessons. To serve God, and to keep out of sin, are of such supreme importance, that we shall do well to lay hold of any aid that may help us to such blessings. To try to do right for fear of punishment, or for the hope of being

respected, or for the sake of the approval of authorities, or to please those whom you love, is a good by no means to be despised. But in these motives, depend upon it, not only you must not, but you cannot rest. These motives will help you for a time; but unless you rise above these at last, their power gradually slackens, the impulse that they give becomes feebler, and we find that unless we have something stronger to carry us on, on we cannot go.

Wherefore strive hard to win early that one highest motive of all, the love of right for the sake of right, the love of Christ for the sake of Christ. It is excellent, for instance, to desire to be true, because of the high estimate which all set on truth, because men will then be able to rely on you; because you will then be so much more useful, and your service will be so much more valuable. But then, and then only, will you begin to feel the real enthusiasm which alone can last when you begin to desire to be true, not only to seem true, when you begin to care comparatively little what is thought of you, but long to be absolutely purely true; when your desire shall be, that you may lay bare your very soul to God your Master, with a consciousness that it is true to the very bottom. Then, and then only, will you begin to see in truth an imperishable glory which you never saw before. Then, and then only, will it be impossible that the light which has shone upon your soul should ever fade away. Thus every Christian grace is seen in its true brightness only, when we learn to desire it purely for its own sake. Thus does the love of Christ Himself then only show its real

glory when we learn at last to come to Him, not for the sake of rest, not for the sake of inward peace, not for the sake of forgiveness, but that we may be made His and like Him.

February 3, 1867.

SERMON XXXIV.

CHILDREN.

ST. MARK X. 13, 14.

'*And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*'

THE Gospel requires of a man that he shall make the service of Christ his first object. Other purposes he may have that shall take and rightly take more of his thoughts, his time, his labour. But only on condition that they are subordinate, and that whenever there is any collision, as there will be every now and then, everything else is to give way to that one service. And, of course, if a man is to make the service of Christ supreme, it will follow that every faculty in him shall be devoted to that service. The Gospel will demand all his will and all his intellect, and will every now and then put them to the utmost stretch of their powers. And so we are led on to think that the service of Christ which makes all these demands can only be truly performed

by those who are in full possession of their powers. How can he give the service of a fixed will whose character is as yet unstable, and who can hardly be said to have a will at all? How can he give the service of his understanding, whose understanding is still unformed and immature? How can he give thought and care, who has not as yet any power of thought? How can he accept divine teaching and obey its guidance, whose intellect, as yet not trained, is unable to understand, much more unable to appreciate religious doctrine?

So, as it seems, thought the disciples of our Lord. They could not see any good in bringing children to Him, since children could not understand much of His teaching, could not follow Him as disciples, could not give Him the service of a steadfast will, could not quite know what they were doing if they promised to be His with all their hearts. But our Lord commanded otherwise. Whatever the imperfections of the service of the children, yet they had that which made them not only fit to come to Christ and belong to Him, but even patterns of all others who ever could come. Their simplicity was worth more than the man's knowledge and the man's strength. They could serve God and Christ without that which was peculiar to the man. But the man could not serve without recovering that which was peculiar to them. The child could be Christ's without being manlike. The man could not be Christ's without being childlike.

Of course it would be absurd to suppose that this is because of a peculiar merit in the young. It is not a

merit, it is a blessing. The young have weaknesses and blindnesses, all their own. And along with these they have this great blessing which is given to them without any effort of theirs, this peculiar fitness to belong to Christ. We all of us start as it were with this gift. We do not all of us use it. Whether we use it or not, as we grow older it generally begins to fade out of the character; and partly we have to make up for it by proper substitutes which belong to later years, but partly we have to retain it by conscious and persistent effort. The childlike character which a Christian has to keep will not remain with him any longer of itself after he has ceased to be a child. While he was a child, it was his naturally and spontaneously. As he becomes a man, he must retain it by effort of the will, or it will leave him.

In what does it consist?

It consists first of all in innocence. There is so much of evil that a child does not know, much indeed that it cannot know. As it grows older, a great deal of what it can and does know by seeing it, may still remain unknown to its own personal experience. About this unconsciousness of evil there is something sacred. It seems more unearthly than anything else that we know. Even when ignorance is gone, yet still innocent knowledge and guilty knowledge are so far apart that still there is a kind of heavenly presence round all those who have not yet sinned in so far as they have not yet sinned. Of such is the kingdom of heaven. This kind of purity, the purity which has been kept clean,

not that which has been made clean, always seems to have a peculiar unearthly lustre. Repentance puts a man back sometimes, not merely where he was, but even higher. A man who has stained himself is sometimes so purified that his character seems more stainless than ever. And yet, after all, he may gain a greater degree of purity than ever, but not the same kind of purity. There is nothing which quite matches perfect innocence. And the innocence of children is more perfect than any other on earth. And as we grow older we have to replace it by hearty and deep repentance, by coming to Christ for cleansing, by fleeing from temptation with the utmost earnestness, by prayer to Christ for strength. And we shall have what we ask. But nothing else can quite replace the simple attachment which binds the innocent heart to the loving Saviour, and the grown Christian clings with earnest longing to whatever fragment of childlike innocence still remains to him. And as he grows older there is no temptation which cuts him with deeper pain than one which solicits him to do a wrong thing which he never recollects having done before.

Yet again, a second characteristic of the child is the instinct of obedience. It is natural and easy to a child to obey. And every wise father and every wise mother keeps the instinct always in exercise. To this natural readiness to obey does the mother appeal when her child is tempted by this trifle or by that. Often a message is sent, or a service is required, just when the little will was on the point of going wrong. To this same instinct the

mother often has recourse when childish troubles fret the temper. Something to be done, something to be fetched, some message to a servant employs the thoughts, and the sorrow is forgotten. The child of course has other instincts, and very early the instinct of obedience comes in conflict with wishes, and caprices, and fancies, and temper, and begins to fade out of the character even more rapidly than the natural grace of innocence. But that same readiness of obedience, that same instinctive impulse to obey superior bidding, the man has to learn if he has not been able to keep. And blessed indeed is he who has kept it. The temptations, the conflicts, the falls, the sorrow, the mischief from which he is saved who has kept on from childhood the readiness to do what he is bid, and who, as other authorities are removed, transfers his hearty and quick submission to God's messenger within the soul, who shall number?

Yet once more, a characteristic of the child is simplicity. There is not, there cannot well be in a child any depth or persistency of worldly purpose. Rather a child is altogether purposeless. Affectation there may be in a child, but it cannot last. It comes and goes. Longing for some particular object there may be, but how easily it is diverted! The heart is readily reached. There is as yet no crust formed over it by selfish aims. There is as yet nothing to check natural generosity. There may be the germs of worldliness, but they are not yet come to their growth: The springs of the heart are still fresh. The impulses are still warm. The readiness to believe is still strong.

This, too, passes away, unless it is kept by prayer and by personal communion with God. This, too, if it pass away, must be recovered, if a man is to be a servant of Christ. And this cannot be kept and cannot be recovered by conflict with ourselves. To keep innocence and to keep the instinct of obedience, demand chiefly the will. But to keep simplicity demands that kind of prayer which seems to make a man familiar with the very presence of God, which seems to keep him constantly in the outer court of heaven, which seems to give him unconsciously the language, the bearing, the countenance only to be got from heavenly thoughts. The child almost always keeps his simplicity longest in his own family. There where he loves and is loved, where his early faults are known, where for a long time he has least temptation to pretend to be what he is not, where there is the least to make his heart cold or hard, will a growing child still be simple even after he has begun to wear a mask of reserve in all other company. And so, too, the Christian finds that there is only one way to maintain constantly pure simplicity of character, and that is to live constantly in the company of Christ.

Now in all these things, how much more blessed is it to keep than to regain? These things you must have. And these things are given you without your seeking at first. And the religion of every stage of life consists in either keeping or regaining these more than in anything else. Can religion be hard to the young? Shall we postpone it to graver years? to times when we

shall be more thoughtful, when we can give a fuller service? to days of fuller experience? Shall we put it aside as inconsistent with the merriment of youth, with the delightfulness of a round of enjoyment, with the thoughtlessness which is in itself so great a pleasure? What can be a more foolish mistake? Is it inconsistent with the gladness of youth to love either father or mother? And if not, how can it be inconsistent to love God? Is it not comparatively easy now to avoid doing wrong, which we have never done before, to obey rules which come so naturally in their turn that we almost forget that we are obeying them? To postpone is to transfer the service from an easy time to a difficult time; to give God a troubled service instead of a glad service; to fill after life with many sad thoughts which might have been happy thoughts.

One word more before I have done. There is yet one characteristic of youth which does not seem to belong directly to what I have been saying, and yet is akin to it. I mean its attractiveness. The young do not know how deep an interest, how warm an affection, how keen a sympathy they always attract from those who are older. They do not know how strong is the desire which older people feel to make them happy, to win their affection, to guide them right. They do not know the pleasure which they give when they seem pleased, when they show affection, when they show nobleness, or truth, or unselfishness of character. When a man has grown to manhood there cannot be the same interest in him unless he is a personal friend. He is bound to see to

himself. He cannot be helped in the same way. And God accordingly has not unlocked all hearts to him, as He has to those who are younger. But the young are ever surrounded by those who long for their welfare, whose delight is to see them delighted, whose hope is to see their happiness resting on a sure foundation. Can there be any other time of life when it will be easier to let right feelings and warm-hearted simplicity rule the soul than while much of the childlike character still remains, and the tenderness of God is still reflected all around in the yearning good wishes of older friends?

February 10, 1867.

SERMON XXXV.

THE DISCOURAGEMENT OF FAILURE.

PSALM xxxvii. 1.

'Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.'

THE doctrine contained in the thirty-seventh, and again in the seventy-third Psalms, seems, when nakedly stated, to be hardly needed by Christians. It seems quite an elementary truth that envy of mere worldly success is a foolish mistake, so elementary a truth that it is hardly worth while to insist upon it in a Christian congregation. We have not now to learn that the success of the mere servant of the world is hollow. If we have still to learn it, we seem hardly to have a right to call ourselves Christians. It is not wonderful that such teaching should be needed before the revelation of the Gospel. The old teaching was so bound up with temporal promises and temporal threats, that it was absolutely necessary to warn men against the shortsightedness which would make a brief success a decisive argument, and would fancy that the whole teaching of God's law was set aside by a

transitory triumph of evil, and a transitory depression of the good. And so in these two Psalms the experience of a life is set against the experience of a few years; it is granted that the wicked comes sometimes to great power, and spreads like a green bay-tree; and yet, on the other hand, 'he passed away, and, lo! he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could nowhere be found.' Or again, it is granted that God's servant is sometimes inclined to say, 'Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches; verily in vain have I cleansed my heart and washed mine hands in innocency; yet, on the other hand, when I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I the end of these men. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! As a dream when one awaketh, so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city.' But all this is presupposed in the Gospel. We know that the success of evil is a delusion; a delusion most often exposed in this world, certain to be exposed in the next. We know that this sort of success is not what is promised to the servants of Christ, and that if we never get it, we cannot say that we were led to expect it. Just as the old temptation to idolatry has quite passed away, and mere gross worshipping of wood and stone is now impossible to us, so the temptation to confuse spiritual with worldly rewards is surely as impossible.

Yet I think we do well occasionally to study even these bygone temptations; for, after all, human nature is still radically the same: and we may be quite certain that if we have not to fear the old evils, yet the new ones will be often very like them.

It is quite true that none but the worldly, none who can honestly say they are trying to serve Christ, will make such a mistake as to hold up before their own eyes earthly reward as the fit end of spiritual work, and to look upon it as an unheard-of and monstrous thing that a good man should be less successful in this world than a worldly man. We know that God's will is, that 'as you sow, so shall you reap.' If you sow to this world, you shall reap from this world; and if you sow to the other world, you shall reap from the other world. And no one of us is tempted to turn atheist or unbeliever because we sometimes see this very result before our eyes,—the man of this world succeeding in this world, and the man of the next world failing.

But the danger is not that we shall turn atheists or unbelievers, but that we shall be disheartened; not that we shall lose all faith, but that we shall find our faith weakened; not that we shall stake our life on winning something, at least, here in this world, but that we shall stake the keenness, the earnestness, the perseverance of our service. A man is kind to his poorer neighbours, and then waxes weary of being kind, because he does not find them so grateful as he expected. A man is diligent in his duty, and then relaxes his diligence, because another, with only half the exertion, runs past him. A tradesman is scrupulously honest, and then finds that others, who are not so strict, seem, as it were, to take the bread out of his mouth, while he gets no credit for his scrupulous honesty, and so he lets himself slip into little unfairnesses. A man in society is thoroughly unselfish, and finds that

the only result is that he is unceremoniously thrust aside; or he is humble, and finds a vain man preferred to himself. In all such cases there is of course some danger that we should simply give up trying to do right; that we should say to ourselves, 'I have tried it, and it does not answer, and I mean to try it no more.' But that is not the only danger, nor the commonest danger, nor, I think, the greatest danger. The great danger is that we should relax the warmth and heartiness of our service, as if somehow we were pained at not being better appreciated.

The fact is, that even when we have learnt what it is that Christ has put before us, there still remains the hope that He will give more than He promises, and that we shall get the best of both worlds. And in these later days, when there is no persecution attending the truth, when a certain amount of religion is thought respectable, when the world at large seems to profess to be on the same side as Christ, it cannot but be that a great deal which belongs to Christ's service will be treated by the world as belonging to the world's service, and rewarded accordingly. And so we are encouraged in thinking that we can serve God and ourselves too; and that the service of Christ, instead of ever bringing pain, will always bring pleasure; and so when it does not bring pleasure, we are disappointed, and tempted to be weary, and careless, and disheartened. We are not tempted, perhaps, to say distinctly, 'I will not think about the other world at all; nor about God's service, nor about the law of the Gospel.' But we are tempted to give so much weight to these dis-

appointments that we meet with, as practically to make them determine our conduct.

Nor, be it observed, is this temptation confined to those who are cold in God's service. On the contrary, certain forms of it are felt very keenly by men who yet are very much in earnest in wishing to serve God. Men sometimes feel a great longing to give up something for Christ's sake, a wish that they could escape this world's luxuries and comforts, a desire to suffer some downright pain, that might make them feel that their service was real, a longing to have over again the old times, when a man could prove his religion by bearing persecution, and yet these same men are liable to be daunted and disheartened by the very crosses of which I speak. Some can bear discomfort, but find it very hard to bear ingratitude and loss, a coldness in return for love; some will bear pain, but find it very hard to bear mortification; some will bear illness who cannot bear failure. And so many who really long to give up something for Christ, want to choose what they shall give up, and find it a real temptation when they are called on to give up what He has fixed on and not they.

To many people it is easy to pray 'Thy will be done,' in the sense 'Grant that we, that I, may do Thy will;' but it is very hard to pray 'Thy will be done' in the sense 'Grant that we, that I, may submit to Thy will, may love Thy will, may desire to have it done to me.' To resign ourselves seems, as it were, the utmost that we can reach. But to put into our resignation the same earnestness, the same heartiness that we wish to put into

our obedience, this seems very difficult. To be passive, and bear what God sends, seems just possible; but to be just as much in earnest, just as keen in obedience, just as willing to look up to God as our loving Father, this seems hard, perhaps too hard. We do not turn quite away. But the edge of our faith is blunted.

And yet it is quite certain that there will be trials for every man of this very sort, and that if we cannot persevere through them, our faith is unsound at the core. The trial which I most commonly observe besetting those who live together as we do, is the temptation to selfishness. 'If I do not look after myself, no one else will. If I am unselfish and every one else is selfish, the only result is that I suffer, and suffer more than my share. I am willing to be unselfish if others will be the same; but not alone.' This comes into the mind quickly, and yet is as distinctly unchristian as anything can well be. The Christian who allows himself to be driven into selfishness because his unselfishness meets with no reward, is distinctly giving way to mere worldliness. And if this fastens on him and becomes his rule of conduct, he becomes—he must become—a worldly man. But though I said that this is the form of the temptation which I most often notice, every one who looks within himself will instantly recognise other similar trials, perhaps much harder to deal with than this. The persecution of the Cross has not ceased. The Christian has still a good deal to bear which other people have not to bear. A true conscience brings on us much pain, from which we should be free, if we were free from the conscience. The

Christian is happier, far happier than he could be if he were not a Christian. He has a wellspring of happiness within him which, if he were not a servant of Christ, would never be there. But he is not freer from pain, from disappointment. He has not less to bear; he has more. He is not more successful in this world; he is very often less. There are men, no doubt, who utterly fail of success in both worlds; for while their want of faith, and truth, and love makes them no servants of Christ, their want of self-control and of common sense robs them of all chance in this world. But, on the other hand, the thorough-going servant of this world will succeed in this world better than the Christian. And the Christian cannot learn it too soon.

What, then, follows? This follows: that the service of Christ demands a generous devotion. Not a devotion which casts back an eye on that which is left behind; not a devotion which shall be disheartened if it meet with no return; not a devotion which measures everything by results; not a devotion which chooses its own sacrifice; not a devotion which gives with one hand and takes away with the other; but a devotion whose reward is to give, and not to receive. When St. Paul preached the Gospel which he was sent to preach willingly, he had a reward,—and what was his reward? To receive no wages. When James and John were ambitious of high place near our Lord's throne, He promised them not that they should sit on His right hand and on His left, but that they should drink of His cup, and be baptized with His

baptism. And now Christians who wish to serve Him shall be rewarded, not by His love, no, for that they have always had, but by being enabled to love Him, for that is the highest of all blessings. To be loved is indeed a blessing; but to be able to love, what can be compared with that? Happiness it is, and strength, and holiness, all in one; and the road by which we reach it is single-hearted obedience.

March 3, 1867.

SERMON. XXXVI.

ACTION THE TEST OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

ROMANS vi. 19.

'I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.'

IN this passage St. Paul speaks after the manner of men because of the infirmity of the flesh. That is, he no longer uses ideal language applicable to a perfect Christian; he uses practical language applicable to such men as we are. In strict correctness of speech, you cannot be a servant of righteousness, because righteousness is true freedom, and he who does right is essentially free. To obey God is not to be in bondage; it is to be in the state of perfect liberty. And it is the only perfect liberty. For if you do wrong, some part of your nature must be constrained—namely, your conscience, if nothing else. But if you do right, every faculty within you, if it be in a right state, joins heartily in the act, and therefore every faculty is free. To do

right is inner harmony; to do wrong is inner discord. Now discord necessarily implies that one part is opposed to another part, and therefore that if one part conquers the other part is enslaved. But harmony allows all to conquer together, and so no part is enslaved.

But all this is ideal. In reality, there is quite as much discord in us when we do right as when we do wrong: nay, it is even more perceptible sometimes, not less perceptible. There is quite as much sense of restraint. There is even a keener sense of life being a service. We say indeed, and we mean what we say, that God's service is perfect freedom. But we mean that it is perfect freedom to perfect Christians, and we know that we are not perfect Christians. We feel the infirmity of the flesh so strongly that it seems hardly necessary for the Apostle to explain why he uses the language that he does. There is more need of explanation when he uses the other language than when he uses this that we find in this passage, for this is our own ordinary language.

Observe what is the phrase for which he thus apologises, 'Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.' The service of righteousness ought to be no service. He ought to say, 'Let your members follow their true bent and do righteousness.' But he cannot say that, for he knows that as things are, doing righteousness is a service, and that not an easy service.

The ideal state is to be so filled with the love of all that is excellent, that the doing of what is excellent shall always be pleasanter than anything else. And, of course, when that is the case, when we really like

doing right better than anything else in the world, then doing what is right is not only liberty, it is felt to be liberty; it is identical with doing what we like. This is the ideal state. This is the state which Christians aim to reach. This is the state to which men can be lifted by the love of God, by the power of the Cross of Christ. When men have reached this, they have reached the true liberty of the Gospel. But what is to be done meanwhile?

Meanwhile there is nothing to be done but to obey the Apostle, 'Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.' I wish to lay stress on the very words that he uses.

First, then, the word 'members' plainly implies that he is here thinking not so much of thoughts or of feelings as of deeds. The word belongs properly not to the inner but to the outer life. The whole drift of the epistle is to represent the outer life as nothing when compared with the inner. And it is nothing, if ever the two are put in opposition. If there is any inclination to balance one against the other, and say, 'I do not desire to serve God; I do not care for others; I have no love for the law of right; I have no wish to purify my heart; but I do everything which is commanded, and therefore I claim salvation;' if that or anything like that is in the mind, then it is necessary to say such obedience is worth absolutely nothing. You can get salvation on no such terms. An outer life which is quite correct with an inner life which is spiritually dead, whatever show it may have, will not be approved by God. But the case is quite

different if the outer and inner life are not opposed, but working together, and we are asked what is the relation between them. Then the answer is: This outer correctness is one of the most powerful of all instruments for perfecting the inner life. To do right is one of the very best ways to enable yourself to be good. Obedience is one of the directest and surest roads to holiness.

For if we look again at St. Paul's words, this is what he implies, 'servants to righteousness unto holiness.' By making your outer life a servant to God's law, you train yourself to that inner holiness which is the object of hunger and thirst to every true Christian. To give up the outer life to the law of God, if that is to be all, is not enough. But if you do not mean it to be all, if you are pressing forward, if you have fixed your hopes not on outer obedience only but on inner devotion also, then the obedience of the conduct is the direct road to holiness of the heart.

This is one of the senses in which the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. This, again, is one of the senses in which doing God's will leads to knowledge whether doctrine come from God or not. This is one of the senses in which the love of Christ is identical with keeping His commandments, and our Lord Himself tells us that such keeping of His commandments will bring the Father to come and make His abode with us.

If the outward doing of duty be made a substitute for heartfelt devotion, for desire to please our heavenly Father, for coming to Christ, then we fall into the mistake of the Pharisees. But if it be made the beginning, the gate-

way, the stepping-stone, then we shall certainly find that heavenliness of mind follows it at last, as surely as day follows night.

There is such a thing as feeling utterly weary of striving to do one's duty, not because the duty is distasteful, but because our cold dead hearts seem never to be warmed, or thrilled, or roused by it. A Christian sometimes fights a very hard battle with some fault and just keeps clear of it and no more, and is conscious as it were all the time, that though he does keep clear of the outward actual sin, he is making no progress. 'I am fighting no true battle,' he says. 'My motives are false; half earthly; not purified. I am not singlehearted in my service. I am still longing for my own way, and not for God's way. I am still hankering for the very thing which God does not seem to mean me to have. I am trying to reconcile a little service of God with much service of myself. I do just succeed in keeping the evil thing out of my deeds, but I cannot root it out of my heart.' So a Christian says, who has battled long with difficult temper, with weakness and cowardice, with vanity and falsehood, with appetite, with idleness. Too often, if he wins so far as to keep from the outward sin, he is still conscious that the inward sin remains. He seems to himself to have no inner life; no love; no force of devotion; no hearty desire.

But if it be so, yet I say, O Christian, persevere. It is by this path that God often leads His people. This is one of His appointed ways, and, in fact, it is the way which all but a very few have to tread. God in His love

has provided that the best road for most men to come to Him should also be the easiest. We all know that the easiest is by doing. Bid a man believe; bid a man feel; and you have often set him a very hard task. But bid a man do, and though he may dislike it much, yet he knows and you know that that is within his reach. So has God dealt with us. With most of us He begins by bidding us do. The belief is needed, and the love is needed; but the first thing of all is to show the faith by the works. So I say to any Christian who finds himself still cold and half-hearted, in spite of his having tried his utmost to do his duty, still persevere. Persevere in doing, even if all your efforts do not at present bring you above the point of doing. It is in itself a great blessing, and the older you grow the more deeply you will feel it, it is in itself a great blessing to do the right and avoid the wrong. To keep out of outer sin is a blessing so great that no earthly language can fitly measure it. But that is not all. Persevere, and you will find that some day that still higher blessing will come to you which you miss at present. You long for the time when you shall give your heart and not your will only to God's righteous law. You long for an assurance within you that you are God's. You long to find within yourself something like earnestness and depth. I say persevere in obedience, and that day will come, if you continue to desire it. Higher impulses sometimes thrill the soul all at once, and we know not their source. And sometimes the heavenly mind grows silently within, and the man in whom it grows knows nothing of its growth except that once

he was in trouble, and now he is in peace. And sometimes God blesses some special effort of the will, and we climb up aided by His hand and arm to be nearer to Him for ever after. But however that may be, in all cases the easiest way to Him always is simply to do His will. You will find that no obedience of that sort is ever lost, however much it may seem to be lost. I do not think that we can believe that even St. Paul's early training by the Pharisees was lost to him, though for a long time he made a bad use of it, and let it stand between himself and God. When at last he was converted, we may be sure that it was no loss to him that in all his early life he had been trained to obey the law of God. And how much more can the same obedience do for us if all through it we have not the false comments of the Rabbinical teaching, but the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give meaning and power to all that we are commanded to do.

Let it be granted that outer obedience is but a step, nay, but the first step in the Christian life. Let it be granted that, if we stop there, all is useless, utterly useless. Yet still this outer obedience is a step forwards and not backwards; it is a real step towards God and not away from Him, and if we persevere in that we shall assuredly be led to something higher than that. What better employment can we set before ourselves this Lent than to watch over this outer life of ours and so prepare for Easter Day?

Ash Wednesday, March 6, 1867.

SERMON XXXVII.

HONOUR AND DUTY.

ST. MATTHEW xiv. 9, 10.

'*And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.*'

IT is quite clear that, in spite of his promise, Herod had no right to behead John the Baptist. He had no right to make such a promise, to begin with; and when he had made it, he was for that reason bound to break it. It would be monstrous indeed that a man should be bound to commit murder because he had promised to do so; and there can be no doubt at all that the execution of John the Baptist was murder, neither more nor less. Nor is it difficult to define the principle which governs all these cases. If a man has no right to do a thing, his promising to do it does not give him the right. Such a promise is void, to begin with. A man who has promised to steal, a man who has promised to commit perjury, a man who has promised to do an injustice, has no right to keep the promise which he has made. There is a third party concerned in such a bargain, and he has no right to sacrifice the

right of this third party because he has promised to do so. He may sacrifice himself, and, if he has promised, he must sacrifice himself; but not another. A good man who had been betrayed into such a promise would instantly say, 'I never meant my promise to extend to doing a distinctly wrong thing.' There is one case which shows this in a moment. Suppose a man promises to tell a lie. Shall he keep his promise? That is, shall he tell a lie in order to keep his word? Clearly enough that would be absurd. And as a good man who was trapped into such a promise ought not to feel his conscience bound by it, so even if he has not been trapped into it, but has done it with his eyes open, his repentance will assuredly require him not to keep his promise, but to treat it as void, on the ground that it was a promise that he had no right to make.

Yet I suppose there can be no doubt that such a man as Herod would be seriously perplexed, and would have some sort of scruple of conscience in the matter. The duty of keeping his word might well seem to such a conscience as his prior to the right of John the Baptist to his own life. Very likely he would feel that, while it was wrong, still it was a duty to do so.

There is another instance in the New Testament of what I can only understand as a similar conflict of duties, though so little is said that no explanation can be called absolutely certain. On one occasion we are told that our Lord said to a man, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.' Jesus said unto him, 'Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou

and preach the kingdom of God.' This man, you observe, receives a plain call, a call about which there can be no mistake. He replies by asking to be allowed to attend to home duties first. 'Let me stay with my father till his death, and, when I have buried him, then I will come.' Of course, if this plea had been a sound one, in his case, he would never have been called at all. Our Lord would certainly not have required any man to leave home duties in any case in which home duties rightly had the pre-eminence. He found great fault with the Pharisees for providing a means by which a man might evade the obligations of the Fifth Commandment. He spoke of it as a clear condemnation of their whole system, that they set aside this commandment of God by their tradition. And we have a right, therefore, to assume it as certain that He did not set it aside Himself, and that this man whom He called had no such home duties to attend to as ought to detain him from the work now given.

And yet in this case, too, we can well understand how a man might hesitate, and put one claim against another, and lean, perhaps unconsciously, to that side which looked most easy and tempting. To some extent, in such a case, a man is conscious that the duty which he pleads against a call from God is nothing but an excuse, and that it would not stand if he were called to something that he really liked. But, to some extent, too, he might feel a real perplexity.

Now, conflicts of duty are, no doubt, sometimes quite real, and even a very good man does not see clearly which of two lines to follow. It requires thought and

prayer to decide. And even when the decision is made, it is by no means certain that it is a right decision. For God will not make any man infallible here on earth, however much thought and prayer he may give to the task of deciding.

But far, far more common are the conflicts of duty in which right is all on one side, and only the appearance of right on the other.

What, for instance, can be commoner than the false law of fellowship which makes any one who has joined in wrong unwilling to do right because it would seem like deserting his companions? Just as the man said, 'Let me wait till after my father's death;' so does he, who has companions in evil, say, 'Let me wait till I have got into new society; let me wait till they go from me, or I from them; I know I am going wrong, but I cannot quit the rest, it would not be fair; I will wait, and then I will repent.' It is all but certain, that while he is saying this, there are not a few of his fellows in evil who would eagerly welcome the first proposal to abandon the evil and turn over a new leaf. While he is putting off amendment for their sake, he could not do them a greater service than to commence amendment at once, and give them courage to do what they are longing to do, but dare not. But he does not see this, and he will not be allowed to see it. And so he puts this imaginary barrier between himself and his duty, and has a sort of sense that his conscience is in doubt, and that if he is not doing one duty he is doing another.

Nor is the other, the plainer sin very rare: the sin of

keeping Herod's promise. A promise to do wrong, express or implied, is not very rare, and there can be no doubt that it is a serious burden on every one's conscience. For there can be no doubt that to break a promise is a very serious thing; and nothing can make it right or even permissible but the certainty that he who made the promise ought not to have made it at all. But yet, though it be a serious matter, the case is not uncommon where such a promise ought not to be kept, and yet where false shame, which cares more for the reproaches of a man than for the law of God, prevails over plain duty.

But let me go a step further, to point out that, as a general rule, these perplexities only beset those who begin by wrong doing. All wrong doing has a tendency to call for other wrong doing, either as its natural and proper sequel, or as its only protection. Falsehood, for instance, very often indeed is only the cover of some grievous sin. Had we watched our steps, and avoided the previous sin, the temptation to falsehood would never have come. Herod would most certainly not have had to choose between breaking his word and putting John the Baptist to death, if he had not begun by illegally putting the prophet in prison. A man who tries to evade our Lord's call has generally brought himself within reach of the temptation by an over-indulgent life. We go on in a wrong course with our friends, because we have begun wrong before. We promise to do wrong, almost invariably because we have already done wrong. The conflict, in fact, is one of the sequels of previous faults, and one of the severest punish-

ments. And if we would avoid the temptation of such a conflict, for it is a great and serious temptation, we must watch our steps.

But, again, it is right to say that no one will deny that there is a good side to this fault of preferring the wrong thing when there is an apparent conflict between duties. It would be exaggeration to speak of the wrong choice as evil, and nothing but evil. Let us admit to the full that there is very often much that is amiable, much that is generous, in such a fault as this. A man who, having got into the position to be so tempted, then did not feel the temptation, must be either a very good man indeed, or a very mean and ungenerous man. He must be either so filled with a sense of duty, that the knowledge of duty constantly carries him along and leaves him no feeling for the temptation, or he must be wanting in all warmth of friendship. But to feel the temptation, and to yield to it, are totally different things. Say what we will of that generosity which Milton ascribes to Adam, when he makes him disobey the commandment that he may be Eve's companion; say what we will of the law of fellowship and of the duties of friendship; say what we will of the courage which persists in some wrong in order not to desert a brother in wrong, still wrong is not the less wrong. Nor, indeed, is that the higher and truer courage which faces the consequences of wrong rather than face the reproaches of a friend. Nor is that even the truer friendship. What is the principle that rules it all? This: that Christ is our king, and that to put another before Him in our allegiance is

disloyalty, and to join another in disobedience to Him is treason. To Him we owe, before all others, that very duty which others sometimes seem to claim. In surrendering our wills to Him, we shall always find the solution of every perplexity. And, at the last, if not at the first, the friend or the friends whom we fancy that we are serving by keeping to wrong for their sake, will be the very friends that will cling to us with never-failing gratitude, if we show them the example of being the first to return to the royal standard of the Captain of our salvation.

April 7, 1867.

SERMON XXXVIII.

LIBERTY OF OBEDIENCE.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 13.

'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'

EASTER DAY is for us the festival of freedom. Just as the Passover to the Jew was the commemoration of national liberty, so to the Christian Easter is the commemoration of spiritual liberty. It is the deliverance out of the house of bondage. It is the breaking of chains; the dethroning of the tyrant. And this makes it the great festival of the year, for it translates us into the spiritual world, the very essence of which is freedom.

Let us think a little what is meant by freedom, this freedom, the freedom of the will.

We are by nature subject to the laws of nature, and the very meaning of a law of nature is that those things which are subject to it have, so far as they are subject to it, no freedom at all. There is no freedom in the earth as it rolls round the sun. There is no freedom in the plant as it grows beneath the heat of the summer. There is no freedom in the apparently capricious changes of the weather. In all these cases we assume that whatever

happens is governed by a fixed rule, and that from that rule no deviation is possible except by a miracle. Who made the rule is another question. He who made it can no doubt unmake it, if He choose to do so. But unless He does, the thing can do nothing but obey. Such obedience is not free.

But when we pass from the study of dead things like the weather, or living but insensible things like plants, to the study of creatures that have both sense and power of movement, we are no longer at first sight able to deny that these creatures, namely, the animals, are free. They seem to have ways of their own; to make a choice; to decide between this and that; to be influenced by some inward power, and not merely to follow an external direction. In some sense they seem to be free. However, it is not possible to prove that they are free. It is quite possible to account for their doings, for all their movements, by supposing that they are subject absolutely to the strongest attraction at the moment. It is quite possible to suppose that they move this way and that, they do this and that, just as iron moves this way and that when attracted by the magnet: They feel an impulse of pleasure, and they instantly endeavour to gratify it. They feel an impulse of rage, and they spring to satiate their passion. They feel a shock of fear, and they are cowed, and shrink and flee. We can very well suppose all animals to be really subject to natural law, and not truly free at all. And in that case their semblance of freedom would be no more than a shadow; a type as it were of a higher nature; an

anticipation of something more divine; but not itself true freedom.

In this way the life of animals is a kind of debateable land between what we mean by freedom and what we mean by mechanical subjection to law. We can conceive this life to belong to either one division or the other.

It is, however, undeniable that the tendency of all our study is to reduce all this mere animal life to the class of things that are subject, and not to the class of things that are free. The more we study, the more widely do we find that the reign of invariable law holds good. It would not occur to a half-cultivated mind to deny that animals have a sort of freedom. But the student of God's works will always find himself more and more inclined to think that animal life, as such, is not free at all, and is merely drawn hither and thither just as the strongest impulse seizes it. It is capricious; but so is the weather. And yet no one would think of ascribing freedom to the clouds, or to the winds that move them. The laws that govern the motions of living animals may very likely be so subtle that we shall never succeed in even approximating to a precise account of them. Yet all our study points to the conclusion that this is merely because we can never hope to carry our science so far, not because there is no such account to be given.

Now, so far, all this falls in with the teaching of revelation. It is plainly implied that we, as far as our mere animal life is concerned, are in a state of bondage. We are doubly in bondage. For not only is our animal nature subject to laws which in itself it cannot break;

but besides this we are conscious of a higher nature which ought to have laws and action entirely of its own, but is impeded by these animal impulses and dragged hither and thither in obedience to them.

Here, then, precisely comes in what we mean by freedom when we speak of the freedom of the human will. Let us grant that when a man is doing a thing because he likes it, or when he is indulging a fit of passion, or when he is yielding to an impulse of sentiment whether good or bad, he is not necessarily free any more than a dog or a horse is free; there still remains in human nature a spring of action quite distinct from all these. For a man can do a thing simply and solely because it is right; not from any impulse, not from any pleasure in it, not from any hope of pleasure or fear of pain, but simply because it is right. And to do right simply because it is right is to be free.

There are those who deny that men are free any more than animals. They claim to be able to reduce human action like all other action to the same subjection to fixed law. They say that in all cases men obey whichever impulse happens to be strongest, and therefore that they are like irrational creatures, led simply by whatever makes an impulse stronger than another. We may admit it for all kinds of human action whatever, except one. We may admit that the man who runs after each pleasure as it comes is no more free than the thistledown which is blown by the wind. We may admit that the man whose soul is mastered by some one ruling passion, is no more free than the beast of prey pursuing

its food, or revenging provocation. It is conceivable, nay, it is exceedingly probable, that in all gratification of his own inclinations even the very best, even in some degree in gratifying the social and domestic affections, men are not free at all. It is exceedingly probable that a very great part of our life is as purely the working of mere nature as the beating of our hearts or the digestion of our food. But in one thing we are compelled to hold that man is free, and that is in doing right; for right would cease to be right if it were not done by a free agent.

Consider for a moment. You like a certain flavour, and when you have it in your mouth you experience a pleasure. Now, you will experience this pleasure just as well if, instead of putting it into your mouth on purpose yourself, you got it there without intending it when you were drinking a glass of water. The pleasure is not gone because you were not free in getting it, because the getting it was not your doing. But if you are ordered by your conscience to do an act of justice and refuse, and then you are compelled to do it by force, or do it without intending it at all, is not all the justice of your act gone? The essence of right doing lies in the freedom of the doer. If the doer be not free, the deed that he does is neither right nor wrong.

Here, and here only, therefore, namely, in choosing between right and wrong, are we quite sure that man is free. Here, and here only, do we distinctly belong to another world. At this point we touch the world of spirits. At this point are we subject to a quite different

set of laws, laws of a different kind. For all that we see with our eyes is subject to laws of nature; laws that are as fixed as a machine; laws that cannot be disobeyed; laws that are only called laws because they are invariably observed. But the world of spirits, and in it the will of man, are subject to laws which can be obeyed or not, which work not by mechanical constraint but by spiritual power, which are fitted to rule not dead matter nor yet irrational appetites, but moral beings with will and conscience. We may conjecture that in many other ways our nature as it is will be fitted to the needs of another world. We are plainly told that we shall in some sense carry our bodies with us after the resurrection, and that these bodies will be changed so as to adapt them to their new dwelling-place. But this we can only half understand. What the change will be we are not told, and probably it would be quite impossible to tell us, because we have not the senses to appreciate the description. But in choosing between right and wrong, we belong to the world of spirits already. We are out of this world in the very act, and taking our place in the next; taking our place either among God's servants or among His enemies. This is our one certain point of contact with the world that we cannot see. This is the one access by which we already penetrate into what lies beyond the grave. This is the one channel by which the power of that other world enters our souls.

Now, this being so, it is natural to say with some wonder, 'How very small a part of human life, according

to this showing, appears to be certainly free.' The choice between doing right and wrong enters into life often enough, no doubt. But how much else there is! All our pleasures, our desires, our feelings, our impulses, our emotions, all these appear to be subject to mere mechanical laws; they are the mere mechanism of our nature. We cannot choose directly what we will like or dislike, what shall make us angry or shall not make us angry, what shall rouse us, or weary us, or strengthen us, or change us. Yes, this is true. We cannot choose these matters directly. If we go, for instance, into temptation, we cannot determine not to be tempted. If we turn away from the thought that is best fitted to reach our consciences, we cannot choose to reach our consciences notwithstanding. If we refuse to obey conscience, we cannot choose to find that conscience is still as sensitive as it was before. Our direct power over ourselves is limited, very limited. God gives our free will very little to do. Only that little is quite enough.

For go on and observe that this very little power, though it be but a small part of that fearful and wonderful machine which we call our nature, is, notwithstanding, the governing part of it. It is a very little thing. So is the grain of mustard seed. So is the leaven that leaveneth the lump. It is but a little thing, but just see how wholly different it can make the life. Imagine two men who are absolutely alike in all other respects, who in all things indifferent do precisely alike, have the same inclinations, the same impulses, but whenever there is a choice between right and wrong, the one invariably

chooses the right, the other exercises no choice at all, but lets the strongest inclination sway him. How long, think you, would these men remain alike? The difference between them would soon be as the difference between heaven and earth. Nay, that is precisely the difference already. For the one thing we know about heaven is, that there the right is always chosen.

It is this, this spiritual power, this freedom to choose the right whenever there is a choice, that our Lord promises to strengthen into absolute dominion over the soul. It is this freedom that Easter Day emphatically celebrates. It is this deliverence that the Gospel preaches. And if the Christian would know whether the message be true, let him try. Let him try with St. Paul whether he cannot do all things through Christ that strengtheneth him. Let him try whether by holding his will firm to the resolve he will not find a strength far beyond his anticipation. It is but a little part of life just at first, perhaps. But he must not therefore think that this little thing is nothing. It is precisely in the little things that the true spiritual power is shown. Hold fast in those little motions of the soul, in the first impulses, in the words and thoughts; hold fast to the freedom which consists in choosing the right, and you will find God Himself with you, upholding you by the power of the resurrection of Christ.

April 21, 1867 (Easter Day).

SERMON XXXIX.

SELF-RESPECT.

1 CORINTHIANS vi. 20.

'Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.'

THE duty which St. Paul here teaches is the duty of self-respect; the ground on which the duty rests is the fact that we are not our own. It is a very natural temptation to fancy we may do what we like, provided our conduct does no harm. If what we are doing hurts nobody in the slightest degree, why may we not indulge all our inclinations? Why may we not do things in secret which we would not do openly? Why may we not do foolish things if they are not mischievous things? Why may we not lower ourselves, if lowering ourselves does not hurt our neighbours? Why may we not test everything simply by its consequences to others, and if the consequences to others are not bad, disregard all else? For this reason, that we are not our own; we belong to God and to Christ; and we must do nothing to lower, to degrade, to injure either our bodies or our spirits, for both are God's:

We must learn self-respect. If we do not value it for our own sake, we must learn it for our Master's sake. Yet, surely, even for and by itself, we could not refuse to acknowledge that he who has no self-respect must deserve contempt.

This duty of self-respect is never lost sight of in the Bible. The very key-note of all self-respect is struck in the account of the Creation. God made man in His own image. And here, of course, it does not mean made man in His own shape, but in His own nature; possessed of faculties as nearly akin to the Godlike as it is possible for the finite to be of kin to the Infinite; with the power of loving, with the power of understanding, with a sense of goodness, of order, of beauty, of harmony: a creature different from all other creatures, inasmuch as he alone was so near to his own Creator. This strikes the key-note. It is impossible to suppose that such a creature is to pay no regard to that image in which he was made. Such a creature was from the first bound to respect himself.

And when we pass from the narrative to the legislation, we find in minute details the same high tone maintained. The worshipper of Jehovah is not allowed to round the corners of his head, nor to mar the corners of his beard. He is not to make any cuttings in his flesh for the dead, nor to print any marks on his person. Why? For no other reason but because it would not be consistent with true self-respect. There is no harm in tattooing the body, and no one could speak of the nations that practise it as doing something wicked. But it was necessary to teach

the Hebrews that the human body has something sacred in it, and must not be lightly or thoughtlessly disfigured; or, in other words, it was necessary to teach them, even by minute rules, the great duty of self-respect.

For precisely the same reason there is no trace in the worship of Jehovah of anything like the cutting with knives and lancets such as was practised by the priests of Baal, when they had been challenged to trial by Elijah. The mad practices of Eastern dervishes find no place in what is recorded concerning the Hebrew prophets. There is passionate devotion; there is free vent sometimes given to the most excited feelings. But always the spirits of the prophets, as St. Paul says, are subject to the prophets, and the worshippers of Jehovah show by their self-control that they have never lost sight of this duty of self-respect. Closely connected with this duty, also, is the prohibition of all forms and shapes of idolatry. For it is true that idolatry is an insult to God, inasmuch as it is lowering the true conception of Him to think of Him as residing in wood or stone or metal graven by man's device. But if you will read the arguments of the prophets, when they are denouncing idolatry, you will see that they quite as often base their reasoning on our duty to respect ourselves as on our duty to reverence God. Isaiah describes the making of a graven image, the work of the smith and the carpenter: he describes how part of the very same substance is put into the fire to warm the worshipper and to cook his victuals, and he cannot repress his contempt for the man who has not knowledge nor understanding to say, 'I have burned part of it in the fire;

yea, also, I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and I have eaten it; shall I make the residue an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?' It is quite plain that what rouses the prophet's indignation here is that want of self-respect which makes it possible for a man to worship what he knows to be inferior to himself.

This duty assuredly is never forgotten for a moment all through the Old Testament. But it reappears in the New with a higher and stronger sanction. For in the Old Testament we seem ever to have sounding in our ears the primeval doctrine, that man was made in the image of God. But in the New there is added to this, 'Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price.' That which was once a sin against the original creation, has become also a sin against the cross of the Redeemer. If it was wrong to spoil or degrade what God made so perfect, how much more wrong to lower in any way what Christ died to purchase!

So, accordingly, St. Paul will not allow Christians to regulate their lives in things indifferent by their own likings. 'No man,' he says, 'liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. Whether we live we live unto the Lord, or whether we die we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.' So he insisted on absolute purity of the body, on the ground that our bodies are not our own to do what we like with. They are the temple of the Holy Ghost, which we have of God. So he will not allow Christians, if they can avoid it, to be slaves. 'Ye are bought with a price; be not ye

the slaves of men.' That a man should care little whether he were a slave or not, seeing that this world soon passes away, and slavery here could not be transferred elsewhere, is quite consistent with St. Paul's general doctrine. Yet he qualifies it with this caution, as if he said, 'You may not care for being in slavery, and it is right that you should not care for the pain, the annoyance, the hardships of it; but you are Christ's, and as Christ's you must care.' So again he declares, 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.' What does he mean? He means this, that being, as a Christian, bound to preserve his own self-control, he will not allow even innocent things to get such a hold of him that he shall not be able to serve God well without them. He will not allow habits of self-indulgence, however innocent; he will not allow enjoyments, however lawful; he will not allow rights, however unquestionable, to have such a grasp of him that he shall be unable at any moment to give them up, if God's service requires them to be given up. So, again, it is on the same principle that he declares that he will sing with the spirit, and he will sing with the understanding also; he will pray with the spirit, and he will pray with the understanding also. For the ground of this declaration is, that the understanding has been purchased by Christ as well as the spirit, and must equally be used in His service. For the same reason, again, he will not allow confusion or disorder in the Church, not even if any were to plead prophetic impulses to justify it. He commands the man who speaks with tongues to be silent, unless there is some one to interpret. He prohibits more

than one speaking at a time. And he anticipates the obvious objection, namely, that the prophets were inspired, and must therefore follow the dictates of their inspiration, by the brief all-controlling principle, 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.'

In the New Testament the duty of self-respect takes this new form, namely, the duty of looking on our bodies and our souls as Christ's property, and therefore to be respected as His. But the duty is not affected by this. It is made more imperative. It addresses the conscience with double force. But in its essence it remains the same.

And if we examine closely, it is easy to see that the duty enters into a very large part of our life, and rules some part of it entirely. Thus, for instance, truth of speech is a Christian duty which we all owe to one another. 'Putting away lying,' says St. Paul, 'speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.' But it is easy to imagine cases where truth is no longer a duty of this kind: I mean cases where our brethren, even though we fully acknowledge them as brethren, have no right to know what they seek to know; where, perhaps, they have been inquisitive, and looking into what did not concern them, brethren though they be; or again, there may be cases where it is distinctly better that they should not know. Is the duty of truth gone? Are we at liberty to speak falsely? Not at all. Even if it be not a duty to others, it is still a duty to ourselves. Even if they have no right whatever to require the truth, still we owe it to ourselves not to speak a falsehood. It is inconsistent with our own self-respect as men

to use our human speech to utter what is false; it is still more inconsistent with our self-respect as Christians; and so St. Paul, while in one place he puts the duty on the ground of membership of one another, in another puts it on the ground of respect for our own new nature. 'Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.' Again, it is not by any means always a sin against others to be cowardly. If you are a coward in defending any one whom you are bound to defend, that is a sin, no doubt, against the one whom you have failed to defend. But very often your cowardice makes no difference to any one; in such a case, is it no longer a sin? Certainly not. It is a sin against your own self; it lowers and degrades you; it makes you contemptible in your own eyes; in fact, it is inconsistent with self-respect; and for this reason it is a very grievous sin. Yet again, buffoonery, frivolity, making yourself ridiculous, may do very little harm to other people, in some cases it may do no harm to any one, but does that save it from being wrong? No, certainly; whether it is wrong or not depends on whether it is consistent with self-respect. Even fun and merriment ought still to be subject to this rule, and though by no means to be discouraged, yet to be ever held in check and controlled by the knowledge that we owe something to ourselves. So again, when we are absolutely alone, are we set free from all rules of propriety? No, certainly; there is a true decorum which will follow a man into the most absolute secrecy; for when no eye in the world is on him, he is still to remember his own self-respect. He must do nothing,

absolutely nothing, which he feels to be in the slightest degree lowering to his own self, inconsistent with the honour which he owes to his own human nature, wounding to his own self-respect.

But, lastly, I must add one word of caution. Self-respect is often copied by pride. 'We will not do this or that, we will not say this or that, because it will lower us.' Lower us in whose eyes? in the eyes of our fellows who do not really know us, or in the eyes of God who does? For that makes all the difference. Our consciences will tell us quickly enough which it is that really rules our conduct. In God's eyes we must not lower ourselves. To do anything which degrades us ever so little before Him is assuredly wrong; wrong, whether others see it or not; wrong, whether harm comes of it or not; for we are His, and to lower what is His is a sin. This thought ought to control our lives; be present to us at all times; be able to check us in the freedom of mirth, and in the secrecy of solitude. We are bought with a price. We owe a duty to ourselves, because we are not our own.

May 19, 1867.

SERMON XL.

TOO LATE!

2 KINGS xxiii. 25, 26.

'*And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah.*'

THERE are few things more melancholy, either in the history of a nation or in the life of a man, than a sentence of being too late. To wish to repent and to find that the door is shut; to see that you have done mischief and to be quite powerless to undo it, or even to mitigate it; to have made a mistake, and to find it out when it is irrevocable;—against this we rebel instinctively, and find it very hard to submit. Josiah's reformation was emphatically too late. A hundred years earlier Hezekiah had taken the same course, and had won the same praise. Of Hezekiah, as of Josiah, the same record is given, almost in the same words; that there was none like him before, and none like him after. The only difference in their characters, as thus honoured, is that Hezekiah is especially

praised for his trust, Josiah for his obedience. But Hezekiah was not too late. He did restore his people, and the national life was prolonged for a hundred years. Josiah did all he could, but it was too late. The day of grace was past. The fig-tree had been spared once for another year. The keeper of the vineyard had dug about it and dunged it, and for a short time it had seemed to recover. But now it was again bearing no fruit, and the time was come to cut it down; why should it cumber the ground?

Josiah was soon after killed in battle. And of him first, of him alone among all the kings of Judah, is it declared that his death was not a reason for sorrow. 'Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.' For he was pre-eminently an instance of the truth of the saying, that 'the righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.' Josiah was killed, and his reforms rapidly lost their power. The nation, indeed, had not time to go simply back to idolatry, for the Babylonian was upon them. But an utter anarchy of religion prevailed, and it might seem as if it would have been just the same if Josiah had never lived. His work was too late.

His work was undeniably too late to save the nation. But was it therefore too late to serve the Lord? Not so. It is impossible to believe that all his zeal had no effect on the spirits of the unhappy men who were carried into captivity, or who remained to see their country utterly

destroyed. Assuredly it was not without a real effect on the character of those who were subjected to the terrible chastisement of the Babylonish bondage, that the last great national act, the last recorded movement of the spirit of the whole people before the fall, was the reformation of Josiah. It was not a small thing that the memory beyond all others which the people carried with them into their slavery was the memory of the great attempt to restore the true worship of Jehovah. There can be no doubt at all that the captivity was a lesson to the people. They went idolaters; they were never guilty of idolatry again. They had been perpetually disobedient to the law; after they came back, their obedience went the length of superstition. They went a carnal people, who had hardly enough of spiritual insight to understand the true meaning of their own observances; they came back with a knowledge of the power of prayer. And it is impossible to believe that in learning such lessons as these they were not aided by the fact, that what they must have carried with them into captivity was the memory of Josiah's reforms.

This at any rate cannot be doubtful, that the extraordinary favour with which the later writers of the Old Testament speak of the Law begins with the reign of Josiah. The 119th Psalm, in which hardly a single verse does not contain some word about the Law; the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and later on of Malachi; the regulations of Ezra; the zealous religiousness of Nehemiah;—all these come from the same national feeling, express, and keep alive, and hand on to the next

generations the same spiritual purpose which first exhibited itself in all its strength in the repentance of the nation under Josiah.

And this is always the character and the fruit of that repentance which yet is rightly called too late. 'Too late' is a sentence that our consciences often have to pronounce on our amendment. There is but a certain time allotted for each thing to be done that we have to do, whether it belongs to this world or the other, and if we pass the allotted time it is too late for that work to be done. If you are idle here at school, it may for a short time make little difference, perhaps no perceptible difference at all. But you know perfectly well that that is not so always. After a time it becomes too late to recover what you have not chosen to take when it was within your reach. There are things which can be learnt when you are not twelve which can never be learnt as well afterwards; there are still more which must be learnt before you are seventeen or eighteen, or you can never really learn them at all. You may afterwards wish very much that you had not missed the chance; but your wishes will not give you back the power that is gone: you are too late! And the same holds good long after. Each time of life, as it comes, marks off the foundations of certain studies as done with: if you have not laid them by that time, you never can. And precisely the same thing is true of other things besides studies. It is a common saying, that it is never too late to mend. Yet for all that there are habits of which the beginnings belong to childhood, to youth, to manhood; and if those beginnings are not made at the

proper time, they cannot be made afterwards. For instance, it is never too late to correct the temper. But a temper chastened after you are grown up, and one chastened while you are quite young, are not the same things at all. To learn control of the temper is no doubt always possible. The power of learning self-control, thank God, remains with us in some degree to the very last. But to learn a ready sweetness of temper, to be so disciplined that control is not required; to learn a natural pleasantness, not of manner only, but of heart and feeling,—this can be done while we are young; it can rarely be done afterwards. So, again, to check wandering thoughts, to keep the mind out of foolish day-dreams, to have the mastery of imaginations,—this is easy in youth, very hard in later years. So, again, to learn the practice of ready and frequent prayer is quite natural in early years; but to begin it when we are grown up will leave us for a long time unable to shake off a sense of effort which robs the prayer of half its simplicity and power. And as in dealing with ourselves, so in dealing with others, we very quickly come to a point where, if we wish to change our relations with them, we cannot do so. We have got into society which is not good for us. We wish very much we had never got into it. But very often we find that wish altogether too late. We have arranged our lives in a particular way, and we find that it is not a good way. But we cannot alter it. The same mistake is possible in the most serious concerns of life; in the choice of a profession, in the preparation made for it, in the way in which we have entered on it: and yet, how-

ever clearly we may see that we have made a mistake, yet to change is now impossible; we must take the mistake and make the best of it.

Now, in all these cases where we have been mistaken and now see it; or, what is worse, where we have sinned and are now sorry for the sin, is it too late to turn as heartily as we can to God's service, in spite of all that thus hampers us? Is it too late to strive to mend as much as can be mended, even if we have reason to fear that all cannot be mended? Is it too late to watch against faults which seem as if they had become a second nature? It may be too late, quite too late, to set right mischief once done, to avert consequences, to stop the working of the evil that we have set in motion. In correcting your own faults, you may find it altogether too late to win the ease and beauty of that sort of goodness which grows up from childhood. The penitent may have warmth and fervour, but he rarely has calmness, simplicity, largeness, naturalness. It may be quite too late to be what you now would wish to be. It may be quite too late to mend in such a sense that none shall see that there has been something mended. But it is not too late, it is never too late to come back to God, and do badly and poorly and weakly what you ought ere this to have learnt to do well and fully. It is not too late to give to God the useless effort to serve Him, even when the service that you wish you had given Him has become impossible. Nay, useless as such repentance seems, useless it is not. Josiah's reforms were in reality seed cast into the ground which brought eventually an abundant harvest, simply because

they died. Perhaps if it had not been too late, Josiah's reform, like Hezekiah's, might have kept the nation alive for another hundred years, and Jeremiah's denunciations of the coming captivity might have been postponed, just as Micah's were before. But Josiah's too late reform died, and became the seed of the teaching of Ezra. So, too, will all repentance that seems to human eyes unable to restore what has been lost. Whatever it may be that you cannot do, this you still can do—serve God with more heart, follow Christ with more devotion. Whatever faults you find it hard, almost impossible, to cure, yet you can, in striving with them, come nearer to Christ, and open your soul to receive His love. If you cannot be what you might have been, yet you can still be something that Christ will love and value, a humble, penitent soul. If you cannot serve God as you might have done, nay, if you have done harm that you can never undo, yet you can still give Him what He values more than all service, a will surrendered to His will. If it is too late for everything else, it is never too late to join the service of Christ.

June 2, 1867.

SERMON XLI.

UNFORSAKEN EVIL.

ST. LUKE xvii. 32.

'Remember Lot's wife.'

THIS warning, plainly intended by our Lord for all Christians, derives all the more force from the occasion when He said it. He was foretelling the great crisis when men should have to choose between good and evil; the great judgment when instant decision would be necessary, because no more than a brief space would be allowed to decide in. At such a time one would think that, whatever else a man might do, yet, at any rate, he would not hesitate. When the coming of the Son of Man was as clear and unmistakeable as the lightning which lighteneth out of one part under heaven and shineth unto the other part under heaven, then men might perhaps be stupefied, might be bewildered; but, if they chose the good side at all, would surely choose it heartily. Then men might fail for want of strength to choose the good and refuse the evil; might be seduced into a preference for the pleasures of sin; might be unable to make any choice at all; might waver from

nervousness: but surely, if they chose the right, they would choose it with all their will, and the mere excitement would save them from choosing one side, and longing for the other. But our Lord bids men, even at such a time, 'Remember Lot's wife.' For though it be true that a time of high-wrought feeling makes it easier to shake off all hesitation, and though it be true that the sight of Sodom and Gomorrah burning behind would have prevented most from lingering, yet not all; so ingrained in human nature is this weakness of clinging still to what you know you ought to forsake, that even such a time as that will not always free you from it. And, if not such a time, how then can ordinary life?

God bestows on us His heavenly grace; we receive both light and power; what is it that makes our lives so poor an answer to so great a gift? In most cases it is because we sin as Lot's wife sinned. This is the constantly recurring bane of men from the beginning. Rachel marries Jacob, and comes away with one who was pledged to worship Jehovah, but brings away with her her father Laban's images. The Israelites follow Moses into the wilderness, and presently fall a-longing for the fleshpots of Egypt. They hear the Law given from Mount Sinai, and then make a golden calf. They are governed by God, and then ask for a king, that they may be like the nations round them. Hardly any good king's reign is recorded in the later history without the ominous words being added, 'Howbeit the high places were not taken away.' Even to our Lord such disciples sometimes offered themselves, and to one of them He was

obliged to say, 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'

That which above all else makes our difficulty, is the longing to keep with us some little part of that which we ought to forsake, and which in great part we do forsake. We cut down evil very much, and then leave the root still growing in our hearts. We offer our service to God, but we wish to reserve some small thing which we cannot bear to give up. We watch over our deeds, but we still keep evil in our *thoughts*. We check and control our conduct, and still allow ourselves to indulge in evil *wishes*. We walk in the path of duty, but we walk backwards, with our faces turned to what we have left. The work of the Spirit is all but impossible in sanctifying such lives as these.

Now, I am not speaking of the weakness which makes us slip into evil, which we are honestly trying to leave. That weakness, bad as it is, is still weakness, and most assuredly, though we cannot help grieving over it—and indeed it would be a very bad sign if we did cease to grieve over it—yet certainly it cannot stop the flow of God's love, nor ought it to keep us for a moment from Him; nay, rather, it should send us in all haste to seek His aid. A man may sin many times, and yet for all that be very heartily in earnest in trying not to sin. The spirit may be very willing, and yet the flesh very weak. Such a man has to watch more carefully, has to be more severe in keeping himself out of temptation, has to pray more incessantly, has to surrender not merely what immediately leads him to wrong, but even what looks in that

direction. But still he can be conscious all the time that his endeavour to serve God is thoroughly honest, and, however much he may be distressed, he must not be disheartened, nor must he allow himself to doubt the certainty that God will purify his soul at last.

Nor, again, do I mean to say that a man who gives only half a service is in all cases to be put on the same level as the man who gives no service at all. Very often, indeed, it would seem so to human judgment. Very often, if we had to decide, not our own cases, but in the case of others, we should be inclined to say to a penitent, 'You must either be complete in your service, or your service is worthless.' It very often seems fearfully like the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, when a man hides away in the corner of his heart a small part of the wrong pleasure which he cannot quite bear to part with. Very often it is possible to foresee the miserable failure that is sure to come so plainly, that it seems absurd to allow that there is any good whatever in a devotion which is not absolute at least in intention, whatever it may be in fulfilment. But we are fearfully and wonderfully made. And when we see how strangely good and evil can be mixed in the soul, it is impossible to pronounce positively that even a half service is no service, or that coming to God without complete self-surrender of purpose may not have some little good in it for the man that comes.

But what is quite certain is this, that the little evil which is not forsaken, the little risk of sin which we cannot bring ourselves to guard against, the slight temptation that we will not avoid, the brief snatches of wrong

thoughts that we every now and then allow, the hidden hope that after all perhaps God may find a way to separate some pleasure that we are longing for from the sin with which it is at present bound up: all this, so far from little, is *the* fatal bar which interposes between us and the love of God, and makes us ever and ever again fall short of that grace which yet is ready for us at any moment. The duty that we have to do may, perhaps, be all but thoroughly done; nay, if it be an outer duty, visible to men's eyes, it may be thoroughly done. Our service measured by our conduct may be all but thoroughly complete; our lives measured by any human standard may rank very high, deservedly very high, for devotion to God, and to truth, and to goodness. And when we look over the whole, we may be prepared to say that the shortcoming is but a little thing. And yet, so far from being a little thing, it is *the* thing which stops all the sap from flowing out of the vine into the branch; which makes our life, with all its love, still a very poor thing; which, when we kneel before God, makes us cold, and dead, and hard; which kills our enthusiasm, and tells us in secret that we have no generosity, no truth, no power in all our devotion.

We are inclined to think that our want of warmth is constitutional; or that we cannot help it; or that it is some mysterious weakness in our nature, which we might perhaps cure, only that we do not know how. We deplore it sometimes; perhaps even feel responsible for it as a sin, pray against it, confess it, repent of it. But let us first of all always look whether it be not, after all, no

more than the natural issue of a refusal to obey conscience in some matter which we persist in calling little, and which conscience persists in requiring, whether it be little or great, that we shall forsake. We forgive one who has wronged us, and we desire that the forgiveness shall be complete; but we cannot resist saying something that shall mark that we were in the right. We keep down our temper, all but the vent of an angry word. We control wrong imaginations, except that we cannot resist going into the temptation which recalls them. We are resolved to overcome idleness, and we know by past experience that the only chance of really keeping our resolution is to go now, this instant, to work; but we cannot help just waiting a little while. We are ashamed of our vanity, and so determine to check it; but we cannot quite bring ourselves never to indulge it at all. It is impossible to find instances of all kinds. Each can find them for himself. But to what do they all come? Why, to keeping back some one little part of our life when we know that we ought to keep back none. And this little thing, little when viewed by human understanding, is a very great thing viewed by the conscience; for it reveals the spirit in which we live.

What is it that makes a besetting sin so terribly dangerous? It is because a besetting sin usually lays hold of this weakness of our nature. It is always lurking in this hiding-place. It retains just enough hold on us not to be killed outright. It is very often what the Epistle to the Hebrews calls a root of bitterness. If we could but bring ourselves to root it clean up, very possibly it

would never seriously trouble us again. But we want not to part with more than we must. And so what we keep is always enough to start up into fresh vigour whenever it gets a chance.

In short, comparing all things together, there are very few requisites for doing service worth the doing, for training ourselves to characters worth the winning, for being men worth the name, that can be put by the side of wholeness. Let your service, to the very utmost of your power, be complete. The little thing that is wanted to make it complete is, for that very reason, not a little thing at all. We feel this readily, sometimes too readily. There are times when the first failure in a good endeavour quite daunts and disheartens us, and inclines us to give up altogether, because we feel that now it is impossible to give our life that completeness which we know is best. And we are tempted to say, 'Rather no service than an incomplete service. I want to do well in this matter, and, since I cannot do well, I will try no more.' And, of course, this is a very wrong pride, and we are bound to beat it down. But it has its roots in what is true enough, that is, the sense that this completeness of service is in itself undeniably excellent, something much more valuable than it seems. Our lives cannot be complete in act; but at least they can in plan and intention. If we cannot help failing, yet we can help allowing ourselves to fail; we can help that half weakness, half dishonesty, which will not determine on a complete submission, a complete self-sacrifice. We can refuse to hanker after what we know to be wrong in

itself, or to be inconsistent with our duty. We can refuse to indulge in thought what we know would be wrong in act. We can be quite honest with ourselves, and resolve to cast out not wrong acts only, not wrong words only, nay, not wrong thoughts only, but even all that looks that way.

So it is, and so only, that a man really receives the full power of that Spirit which is ever busy with our consciences, guiding, enlightening, insisting, warning. So, and so only, can we come to God with perfect simplicity of heart and speak to Him as our Father. So, and so only, are we enabled to choose our path, and hold on in spite of our own sin and weakness to the very end. So are we able to lay fast hold of the hand of Christ, and never quit it in walking through the world.

June 9, 1867.

SERMON XLII.

THE TERCENTENARY.

1 CORINTHIANS xii. 26.

'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.'

I DO not know any institution or any visible organisation of men which more nearly represents to us, on a small scale, the description which St. Paul gives of the Church of Christ than one of our own English Schools. There is the same community of life—strong, quick, penetrating; there is the same independent life of the separate members, blended into the whole and unceasingly influenced, and yet never so lost as to interfere with individual character and responsibility; there is the same variety of duties; there is the same unity of purpose; the rule, that if one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it, is nowhere else more true or more invariable; the rule that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it, is equally maintained. There are teachers and taught; there are rulers and ruled; there are the regular appointed authorities, chosen as far as may be for their peculiar talents; there are all the various irregular influences and powers which indicate living as contrasted with mechanical

action; there are special gifts peculiar to the few here and there; there is also the ever-present need of gifts that ought not to be special at all, but ought, like faith, hope, and charity in the Church, to be the property of every single soul. I know no other instance in which St. Paul's words seem once more not merely so true but so present, not merely a description of what ought to be, but what is. For the expansion of the Church since those days, from one end of the world to the other, to say nothing of other reasons, has made it very hard to feel the truth of the Apostle's description when we apply it to the whole Christian body. How difficult, for instance, it is to recognise at all, in the sense in which he meant it, the characteristic with which I began—'if one member suffer all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it.' The thrill of common life which animated the whole Christian Church when the Apostle wrote, the quick perception of each other's lot, whether good or evil, belongs evidently enough to a time when the Church was still small in extent, standing alone in the midst of a whole world outside, with a peculiar work of its own to do, and a life of its own to live. I know no other place where you can see all this represented before your eyes at this day so much as in an English School.

And if St. Paul had lived a century or two centuries later, we can have little doubt that he would have added to his account of the Church that it possessed within itself a peculiar connection with the past, a memory of past examples, a tradition of past excellence, a legacy of

customs and observances, which though of human growth and therefore by no means free from all mistake or from all admixture of evil, yet was a valuable storehouse of moral influence, forming the character of those who now came in, shaping the new life ever into harmony with the old, binding together, not merely all the members of the actual time, but with them also the past, and, by anticipation, the future, giving to the common life not merely power and quickness, but a sense of perpetuity and the dignity that belongs to perpetuity. In fact, this very thing is said, though not said of the Christian Church as Christian, but as divine. The long list of examples of faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews, what is it but a claim to reckon the Church of Christ as older than the Christian era, and to trace, if not precisely the community of life, yet the community of vivifying principle, back to the earliest antiquity and to the very first revelation of God to man? All these, indeed, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises, and cannot therefore be reckoned as members of the Body. Yet are they the great cloud of witnesses before whose eyes Christians have to live, by whose example Christians are supported, whose approval and welcome are to be counted among the rewards which Christians will one day receive. The Christian Church, if it did not exist before the Apostles were sent forth, yet had its roots in the past, and drew from the past that which the past alone can give, the training and the discipline of long-fixed customs and settled practices, and the translation of spiritual truth into habits of life.

Let me guard against seeming to exaggerate the import-

ance of my subject of this day. It would be, of course, easy to ridicule a comparison between so merely human an institution as a School and the divine creation of the Church of Christ. Yet remember where we are this day, and what we are doing. If this service means anything at all, surely it means that a School ought to be, and in some small degree it really is, neither more nor less than a fraction of the Church. If it deserves its name it must aim in many respects at the same objects. In as far as it reaches its aim it must be animated by the same spirit as that which animates the whole Body of which it is a a part. And, accordingly, for many years the Chapel and the Chapel Service have been in the very centre of our School life. The Chapel was built in the time of one Head Master. It became the special place where another did his greatest work. It has remained ever since the prized possession of their successors. The School may fall indeed (what human thing does not fall?) very short of its professions. But it does distinctly profess a Christian character. And in as far as it is true to itself it is a Christian Body. And when we think of it so, we need not wonder that we should find that here too in its links with past generations it should reproduce for us the picture which is given of the Church itself. A School which has so strong, so independent, so powerful a life of its own, must have its list of great worthies; must find a true power, a true inspiration in its own past history; must contain within itself the accumulation of past life; must have inherited traditions which are not always good, perhaps, but always supply the most healthy means of the highest

improvement; must be responsible for much which it has received, and which it is bound to hand on unimpaired.

Now all this is obvious enough. I do not say it as anything new. If any happen not to have noticed before, that what St. Paul says of the Church finds a peculiar counterpart in such a School as this, yet the moment it is said it is easy to trace both the degree in which it is true and the reason why. But what I want to impress upon you is not the fact so much as the importance of the fact. It is of course true that any body of men that lives much together will soon acquire a common life. It is of course true that when that common life has so much variety within it, comprises so many different functions, leaves so much play to all the infinite variety of human impulse, aims at such important objects, it necessarily exercises a most important influence and possesses a high dignity. But for all that, to notice this and to feel the importance of it are not the same thing. And it would, indeed, be a real gain if we could leave this Chapel with a stronger sense of the value of that affection which brings us all together, and of the duty which we owe to one another not to let it slacken or die.

Those who are no longer members of the School may, perhaps, feel that they have now no part to play in it. How they live or what they do, whether they are honoured among their fellow men for their Christian lives, or are careless of God and of their own good name, may seem to them to be a matter of no importance to us who are still here. They are gone; what harm can they do? But it is not so. The young make heroes of their elders. And the lives of those who are still known to have once

been members of a School can never afterwards be a matter of indifference to their successors. They are followed with watchful eyes. For a long time all that they do which is at all known to the world, whether it be good or evil, their reputation for right principle, for high-mindedness, for courage, for sound judgment, the honours that they may win, the services that they may do their country, are felt to be the property of their School. And so, too, any blot upon their name is felt as a discredit. And so, too, any example that they may set tells with far more force than they know on the younger spirits that hear of their doings. Nor is this true only of those who from whatever reason win distinction in the world. The same holds good of men who are quietly doing their duty without taking further thought about the reputation that shall attend it. How a schoolboy's heart always leaps up when by accident he comes across a man with whom he feels the bond of belonging to the same School, and how readily his best feelings answer to whatever is best in the man who has this claim upon him!

And as the life of those who have once been here is in a very real sense of importance to the School, so too is their affection for the place. That a School should still hold a high place in the regard of those who were brought up there, that they should care to revisit it, that they should acknowledge it in the world, this is no trifle to the School itself. This gives every generation of scholars that kind of pride in the place which always contributes to elevate the feelings. This surrounds the whole body with a sort of charm of attractiveness that nothing else can give. This kindles the imagination, and surrounds the work and

the regulations and the old traditions with an honour of their own. And young hearts find duties easier because the duties have about them the sanction of former generations of scholars, who still seem in the midst of real life to find pleasure in coming back. Such a day as this derives its chief value from the presence, and the attachment expressed by the presence, of former pupils.

And we who are here have our corresponding duties, and recognise to the full their binding force. We recognise that we have received something from the past which we are to labour at and to transmit in the best form that we can give to it. We must not be content with things as we find them: if we should be, we should be assuredly degenerating; for assuredly no generation yet left things as they were without serious loss and danger. We have to strive to make all things better as the conditions of keeping all things sweet and healthy. We shall not follow in the footsteps of the true leaders of the past unless, like them, we ever strive to rise above where we are, to attain a nobler and simpler generosity in dealing with each other, a greater diligence, a stronger sense of duty, a more manly humility, a more religious spirit than we have yet attained. For the thing of highest value that we have received is assuredly not the traditions of the place, not perhaps always, but most often sound and good, not the routine, not the assignment of various functions, not even the great examples of really good men that have been here brought up, but above all, the spirit of striving upwards which takes for its motto the Apostle's words, 'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.'

What we have received we are bound to transmit. Although though we may fail to transmit it as we should desire, yet we cannot fail, except by our own fault, in transmitting this longing ever to be better, to do better, not to stand still, not to be contented with ourselves.

So is it that one generation does its duty by the next. So it is that God has ordained that all the highest lessons of His truth shall be taught. His revelations have always been so made that each successive generation has had its work to do in preparing for the next. The Bible is a record of truths and of observances, of ways of life and ways of worship, handed down from age to age; moulded by each age in turn; growing fuller and richer with time; first forbidding idolatry; and then teaching purity; and then preaching against cruelty; and then teaching the power of Prayer.

The Old Testament is a storehouse of the contributions of successive generations. When we read it we should remember that side by side with the lessons that were taught to the people in words, there was ever going on the working of these lessons into their lives by the slow process of incessant repetition. And as men learnt more, the new revelations did not become less, but more important. It was to the most advanced scholars, to those who already knew the most, that the greatest fresh light was given. And it was when the Jews had not merely learnt as an article of faith, but had worked into their very lives such great truths as the evil of idolatry and the power of Prayer, that our Lord Himself came among them, and started from what they had already learnt to found and to teach His Church.

Granted that the life of a School is but an insignificant fraction of the life of God's Church, yet, as in all God's works, so here the same law can be traced in what is little and in what is great. In a School, too, there is much which can be taught by the gradual action of each set of scholars, each set of masters, on the next, and cannot otherwise be taught as well. And the responsibility of receiving what has already been done and of not ceasing the same labour in our turn, is real and not to be evaded. And to this all can contribute, even those who have left us: all are contributing by joining in this service, which is a pledge of our common Christian life, or else has no meaning at all. That we may make it so; that we may find something higher than an ordinary gathering of friends in this our worship; that while we recognise the chief purpose of the day to be good fellowship and kindly feeling and the renewal of many dear old ties, we may recognise, also, that all this is consecrated to something higher than itself,—this is why we meet here to-day, this is why many of us will join in the Holy Communion presently. For we know that out of these materials, this kindliness and warmth of heart, it has pleased God to build up much that is most precious in His Church, and Heaven is most often revealed to man in these the most natural of all human affections, these impulses of the heart, which seem to be, I do not say the highest, but the most absolutely indelible proofs that man was made in the image of God.

Rugby Tercentenary, June 26, 1867.



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